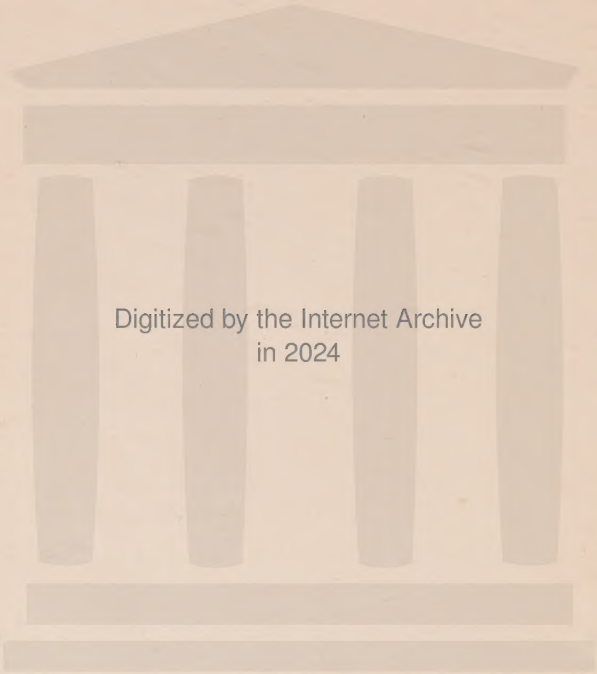
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THE SHRINE OF A PEOPLE'S SOUL

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THE SHRINE OF A PEOPLE'S SOUL

BY

EDWIN W. SMITH

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"AGGREY OF AFRICA" "ROBERT MOFFAT: ONE OF GOD'S GARDENERS"
"THE GOLDEN STOOL" "A HANDBOOK OF THE ILA LANGUAGE" ETC.
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LONDON
EDINBURGH HOUSE PRESS
2 EATON GATE, S.W.1
1929

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First published, May 1929

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LTD., LONDON AND EDINBURGH

TO THE

HARMLESS DRUDGES
PAST, PRESENT, AND
FUTURE

81-0096

TRANSLATION it is that openeth the window to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that remooveth the cover of the well, that wee may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which meanes the flockes of Laban were watered. Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which was deepe) without a bucket or some thing to draw with; or as that person mentioned by Esay, to whom when a sealed booke was delivered, with this motion, Read this, I pray thee, hee was faine to make this answere, I cannot, for it is sealed.

From the Preface to the Authorized Version of the English Bible, 1611.

PREFACE

THERE now exists a great variety of "missionary" books—yarns, biographies, histories, discussions of serious racial problems. But one thing is lacking. Of the missionary as doctor we have heard; of the missionary as evangelist, as explorer, as educationist, we have also heard. But so far as my knowledge goes, there exists no book which deals specifically with the literary work of the missionary. This lack it is my purpose to supply.

It may be thought that this subject is devoid of interest. There are many thrills in the story of the missionary who is the first to burst into some unknown land. May it not be that some thrill is to be found in the story of how men and women have been the first to master some unknown tongue, reduce it to writing, write the first book in it, and finally translate the New Testament or the whole Bible into it? I venture to think that the story I have to tell in this book is one of tremendous interest—if only it could be told as it ought to be.

In writing this book I have in mind several classes of reader. First, the serious lay student of missions, who perhaps has never realized either the value of literary work in the mission field, or the labour entailed in it. And also the young men and women who are thinking how to make the best use of their lives.

91-0096

Perhaps the aspect of missionary service which I here present may lead some to devote themselves to it. It is especially for their sake—and also for the benefit of members of mission boards—that I have discussed the questions of language study, and of the use of the vernacular.

For my sources of information, I have gone first of all to my own experience as a literary missionary, and then to the books published by missionaries and others. I have drawn upon periodicals, and especially upon the files of *The Bible in the World*, which I now edit. The Popular and Annual Reports of the British and Foreign Bible Society are a mine into which I have delved industriously—and profitably.

E. W. S.

LONDON, *March* 1929.

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THE SHRINE OF A PEOPLE'S SOUL

CHAPTER I

NUNGSI NARU ENU?

I

When John G. Paton landed on Tanna, one of the islands of the New Hebrides, in November 1858, he was confronted with the linguistic problem which faces every pioneer missionary. The naked and painted savages were cannibals, and wellnigh constantly at war amongst themselves. They knew as little of the white man's language as he knew of theirs: which is to say, not a word. With the arts of reading and writing they had not the slightest acquaintance. A great gulf yawned between them and the missionary, and until that could be bridged there was no possibility of mutual understanding. The noble purpose for which he had come from afar into their midst was frustrate so long as he could not speak intelligibly to them.

At first [he wrote in the autobiography which has become a classic], at first they came in crowds to look at us, and at everything we did or had. We knew nothing of their language; we could not speak a single word to them, nor they to us. We looked at them,

they at us ; we smiled, and nodded, and made signs to each other ; this was our first meeting and parting.[1]

So things went on from day to day.

Then one morning Mr Paton observed two men admiring some of the strange objects which he had brought to the island. He saw one of them lift an article, and heard him say to the other : "*Nungsi naru enu ?*" Mr Paton caught the words and the note of interrogation. His mind leapt to the meaning. Surely the man was asking, "What is this ?" Instantly he put his surmise to a test. Taking a piece of wood in his hand, he carefully imitated the man's intonation and asked, "*Nungsi naru enu ?*" The two men smiled and spoke to each other. Perhaps they said, "He has got hold of our language now !" Then they gave him their word for a piece of wood.

Some days later two men approached, and one of them, who was a stranger, stopped when he saw the white man, pointed to him with his finger, and said to his companion, "*Se nangin ?*" Mr Paton caught the question and correctly divined its meaning. The man was surely asking, "Who is this ?" So Mr Paton pointed in his turn and repeated the words, "*Se nangin ?*" and got the names of the men. Once again he had hit the nail on the head.

The time was to come when John G. Paton would lose himself in an ecstasy of joy over the first book printed in the language of Tanna :

It was about one o'clock in the morning. I was the only white man then on the island, and all the Natives

[1] *John G. Paton, D.D., Missionary to the New Hebrides.* An Autobiography. Edited by the Rev. James Paton (1891), p. 71.

had been fast asleep for hours. Yet I literally pitched my hat into the air and danced like a schoolboy round and round that printing-press, until I began to think, Am I losing my reason? Would it not be liker a missionary to be upon my knees, adoring God for this first portion of His blessed word ever printed in this new language? [1]

In 1858, however, that ecstatic outburst—as true worship, he rightly felt, as ever was David's dancing before the Ark of his God—was still in the future, and many a long month of toil and suffering was to intervene. But the first decisive step towards victory was taken when from the incomprehensible swirl of speech around him he wrested the two simple phrases, *Nungsi naru enu?* and *Se nangin?* These were the golden keys that unlocked the treasure-house of the Tannese language and gained for the Gospel an entrance into the hearts of the people.

II

It is always the first step that counts most. Once a tiny breach is made in the solid and seemingly impenetrable wall before you, it is comparatively simple to force your way in. Those two phrases have often proved the Open, Sesame! into the mysteries of an unknown, unwritten speech. Yet there are many stumbling-blocks in the way. You can now ask questions and record the answers, so gradually accumulating a vocabulary and a phrase-book. But the answers may be illusory in not meaning precisely what you think they mean.

[1] *John G. Paton, D.D.* (1891), p. 124.

The Rev. J. H. Weeks, a Baptist missionary on the Congo, wanted the word for "table," so he tapped with his finger on the table before him and asked half a dozen boys, "What is this?" One boy said it was *dodela*, another *etanda*, another *bokali*, another *nlele*, and another *meza*. Apparently a rich language to possess five names for a single object! Mr Weeks duly wrote them in his notebook. Next day he ordered his servant to fetch the *bokali*, and was met by a look of utter astonishment. When he came to check the words, he found that *dodela* meant "to tap," that *etanda* meant "a plank," that *nlele* meant "a cloth," that *bokali* meant "hardness," and that *meza* was our old Latin friend, *mensa*, in its Portuguese form. No wonder the servant was amazed when told to fetch the hardness!

My colleague, the Rev. W. Chapman, learnt the Ila equivalent for "What is this?" and proceeded joyfully to apply his newly-gained knowledge. Picking up a hoe, he asked a man, "*Chinzhi chechi?*" and received the reply, "*Uswekonotuladibandaiamba.*" Rather a long name for a common object, thought Mr Chapman, as he painfully recorded it. Then he held up the hoe again and said to another bystander, "*Chinzhi chechi?*" The answer came pat, "*Amebondadibandabobokwinaizhinadinji.*" This still more formidable word was conscientiously, though with difficulty, transferred to the notebook. At a later stage of his studies, Mr Chapman discovered that the first man had said, "We here call it an *iamba*," and the second, "And I also call it the same; there is no other name for it."[1]

[1] William Chapman, *A Pathfinder in South Central Africa* (1910), p. 154

Happy in the possession of the same interrogative, I put it one day to a man whom I found gathering a certain wild-fruit in the forest. "*Chinzhi chechi?*" I asked. "*Ndisediatà,*" he replied. I wrote the word in my notebook, and next day sent a boy into the forest, saying, "Bring me some of the fruit you call *Ndisediatà.*" He disappeared with a blank look upon his face, and did not return with the fruit. Long afterwards I found that the word meant, "It is my father's namesake." My informant's father happened to bear the same name as the fruit, and since it is forbidden in that tribe to pronounce the name of one's father, the only way he could answer my question was to employ that periphrase.

III

How missionaries surmount the barrier of an unknown tongue is surely one of the most fascinating of stories. Unfortunately few of the pioneers have left a detailed record of their procedure. We may imagine that many of them began with signs and pointings. There is a language whose elements need not be learnt, since they are natural to all mankind. If you open your mouth and rub your stomach, somebody who sees you is sure to conclude that you are asking for food or water. You may point to an object, and if you keep pointing long enough somebody is certain to draw the inference that you want to know its name.

With a notebook in hand and a pencil we sallied forth to gather our first vocabulary [writes the Rev. C. W. Guinter, who reduced to literary form the language of the Wurkum tribe in Nigeria]. The people soon

gathered to see what we were doing. They said we were marking on a paper with a *gi nyonli gi*, "thing marking thing"—the only word they knew for a pencil. Then, pointing to different objects, we listened as the Native spoke their names, and we wrote down phonetically what we thought he said. We pointed to the sun and he replied, "*missa.*" A tree he called *ngun.* A stone was *tali.* He began to count, 1 *mogha*, 2 *bari*, 3 *tarum*, 4 *yini*, 5 *tununu*, 6 *tisa-mogha*, 7 *tisa-bari*, 8 *yinini*, 9 *musu-mogha-lum*, 10 *lum.* By this time someone was bold enough to ask, "*Mindi ni man?*" We were puzzled. We did not know what it meant, but we wrote it down. After a bit another pointed to another object and used the same words. It then dawned on us that he was asking, "What is this?" And there was great rejoicing, for we had learned how to ask one very important question in the language, one that would open the doors into more of the secrets of this strange tongue.[1]

Picture yourself trying to pick out a language "teacher" from a group of men who cannot read or write their own language, who never went to school in their life, who perhaps have never seen a book, a pen, or a pencil, and who do not understand one word of your language. Imagine trying to overcome his fears, and persuading him to come to your house. Then how would you make a start? If you were to ask him in English, "What is this?" he would look half-frightened at you, not understanding what you said, and would most likely become suspicious.

So writes the Rev. A. W. Banfield, who for twenty-five years has made a study of the Nupe language of

[1] C. W. Guinter: "The Pioneer Missionary and the Unwritten Language," in *The Lightbearer* (the organ of the Sudan United Mission), January and February 1927.

Nigeria, has compiled a dictionary and translated the entire Bible. He proceeds :

The first thing I did was to put up one of my fingers, then another, and another. By this my teacher understood that I wanted the numerals. He said *nini, guba, guta.* I went on to ten on my two hands, and by using my two feet got up to twenty—a unit in the language. In going beyond twenty I used cowrie shells, the currency of the country. Next I pointed to my head, my arm, my leg, then to the different objects in my room. The task was most intensely interesting—fighting for every word, ferreting out the meaning, losing the trail for days, writing the different explosive and intoned sounds, so that I could recognize and pronounce them correctly another day. Words won in such a way are never forgotten. In all my studies I never wrote the English equivalent for a word. I tried hard, and, to some extent, succeeded in developing my memory. Little wonder I dreamt and raved in the new language. To think in it and speak it with unconscious precision was my one burning desire.[1]

For two years Mr Banfield resolutely refused to read an English book, except the Bible, in order not to distract his mind from Nupe.

It is well not to be over-careful of one's dignity when learning a language under such conditions. Other missionaries have been compelled to comport themselves as did the Rev. A. A. Lind, who made the first attempt to reduce to writing the Mardia language of an aboriginal tribe of India. He found it necessary to

[1] A. W. Banfield, "The Lure of Language Study and Bible Translation," in *The Bible in the World*, September 1927.

resort to all kinds of devices in order to obtain words.

I grunted like a pig [he says], quacked like a duck, neighed like a horse, howled like a jackal, and so forth ; I also had to exercise all my artistic abilities in drawing various kinds of animals, birds, and insects.

But along this road also there are pitfalls awaiting the unwary traveller.

With their genius for picking out a white man's characteristics and naming him accordingly, the Africans among whom the Rev. A. E. Ruskin laboured named him " The-white-man-who-carries-a-book-he-who-pesters-us-with-questions." When he first arrived on the Congo, he could no more understand the people's speech than he could the cackling of fowls—not so much, indeed, for anyone can understand the self-congratulatory language of the hen who has laid an egg, while Mr Ruskin could not catch the drift of a single phrase. He started by pointing. But, unfortunately for himself, he did not then know that the African thinks it rude to point with the finger ; to indicate an object he shoots out his lips in its direction. Mr Ruskin pointed his finger at a cooking-pot, and when somebody said *bosembe,* he wrote in his note-book, " bosembe = a cooking-pot." But he was wrong. He acquired the word for " to give," and putting the two ideas together, he said, " *O'n ka bosembe.*" The person he addressed looked astonished, as well he might ; for what the words meant was, " Give me a finger." Seeing his finger protruded, the people had naturally concluded that he wanted the word for

finger. On another occasion, in search for the equivalent of "fire," he took a stick and pointed to a fire. He got a word which turned out afterwards to mean "to poke a fire." Subsequently he learnt how to point in the African way, and instead of using his finger he would shoot out his lips towards an object and say, "What is the name of that?"[1]

Some years ago, Mrs. Leslie Milne saw in Rangoon a number of curiously dressed folk, walking in single file, under the escort of Buddhist monks, to the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. She learnt on inquiry that these strangers were pilgrims from the Palaung country in the mountainous interior of Burma. Becoming interested in them, she determined to travel to their home and learn their language, which at that time was unwritten. Mrs Milne describes some of her experiences, as follows:

At first the attempt to compile a vocabulary was slow work. I knew very little Shan, which was the only language besides their own that the Palaungs knew. I found, however, several Indian traders who could speak both Shan and Hindustani, and who were willing to act as my interpreters. I had, of course, to pay them enough to make up for the loss they incurred by shutting their shops to come to me. My servant, who was an Indian Mohammedan, also knew a certain amount of English. We began with quite simple sentences, such as: "The dog runs," and "The child cries." I said my English sentence to my servant, who repeated it in Hindustani—of which I had some knowledge—to the Indian trader; he in his turn

[1] A. E. Ruskin, "Translating the Scriptures," in *Regions Beyond*, March 1907.

repeated it to the Palaungs, and finally I got the sentence in their language. Sometimes the traders failed me, and then I tried to get the names of objects by pointing at them, and verbs by action or gesture. After two or three weeks the Palaungs understood what I wanted, and were most willing to help, but it was not easy to be sure that they had given me the right word. I might want the word for "lip," and by pointing to it get the word for "mouth"; I might pretend to eat, and for "to eat" be given the word for "bite"; I might lie down and pretend to sleep, but instead of the word for "sleep" I might get the word for "lie down," or perhaps for "tired." When I wished to know the word for "hand," I might be given one that meant "to point with one finger," or the person might say *tai au* ("hand my"), and I might write down *tai-au* as meaning "hand," not realizing at first that the possessive pronoun followed the noun. I remember that I had collected words for "walk" and "run," "sit" and "stand," and had omitted to get one for "jump." I placed a stick on the floor and jumped over it several times: I then mounted a box and jumped down. The Palaungs present were immensely amused, and all shouted one short word, *rü*, which they unanimously agreed must be the one that I wanted, and which I accordingly wrote in my notebook opposite the English word "jump." But, alas! when I revised with the Indian traders what I had written without their help, I found that, although most of the Palaung words so gathered were correct, the expression given me for "jump" meant "mad." And no doubt with reason; for if an elderly woman of any nationality were seen jumping over a piece of wood on the front veranda of her house, it would seem to onlookers to be a very peculiar and mad proceeding.[1]

[1] Mrs Leslie Milne, *The Home of an Eastern Clan* (1924), pp. 2, 3.

IV

Mrs Milne's experience reminds us that some pioneers are able to approach the unknown language through the medium of a language which they know, whether it be their own native tongue or another. This, of course, implies a teacher of some kind who knows both languages.

We are thinking in this chapter, primarily, of unwritten forms of speech, but may now recall that some of the great literary languages of the East were originally, to some extent, acquired in this way.

Dr William Moseley, who, in 1798, had issued a circular urging the establishment of a society for translating the Holy Scriptures into the languages of the most populous Oriental nations, and who was particularly interested in China, met, one day in 1805, a Chinese gentleman walking down Leadenhall Street, London—a rarity in England at that time. He stopped and invited the stranger to dine with him, and learnt from his guest of another Chinese, named Yong Sam-tuk, who had come to England to study English. Through Dr Moseley an arrangement was made for Robert Morrison, then preparing to go out as the first Protestant missionary to China, to learn Chinese from Yong Sam-tuk. The two young men transcribed a Chinese manuscript of the Gospels that had been preserved in the British Museum, and a manuscript Latin and Chinese dictionary which was in the possession of the Royal Society. Morrison, therefore, went out to China with some knowledge of Chinese—a knowledge which he extended and deepened to such

good purpose that he translated the whole Bible in after years.[1]

When the pioneers of the London Missionary Society landed in the island of Tahiti on March 1797, they were by no means the first white men to penetrate to the southern seas. Two Europeans were actually residing on the island—one of them a shipwrecked mariner, named Peter Hagersteine, a Swede. He had picked up a slight knowledge of the language, and was able to act as the missionaries' first interpreter. We are not told whether he translated the sermon preached before forty Tahiteans on the quarter-deck of the *Duff*, the very first day of the vessel's arrival off the island. He was undoubtedly of some assistance, but " he was a man of low education and bad principles ; and if he did not intentionally misrepresent the communications of the missionaries, his statements must often have conveyed to the Natives' mind very erroneous impressions of their sentiments and wishes." The missionaries had brought with them a small vocabulary compiled by one of the mutineers of the *Bounty* who had resided some months in Tahiti. On the voyage they studied this precious document assiduously. They arranged many of the words in sentences on the pattern of the English idiom. The result, as might be imagined, was often ludicrous in the ears of the Tahiteans. One sentence ran, *Mity po tuaana*, and they intended it to mean " Good night, brother," but somehow it always amused the king. *Mity* might represent the Tahitean *maitai*, " good," or it might

[1] Marshall Broomhall, *Robert Morrison : A Master-Builder* (1924), pp. 26–33.

stand for the English " mighty " ; in any case " Mighty night, brother," or " Good (is the) night, brother," was quite incomprehensible, and even funny, to the people. They found also that the islanders had picked up, and strangely transformed, certain English phrases dropped by English sailors. *Oli mani* (a corruption of " old man ") was, for example, the common term for anything worn out—a blunt or broken knife, a threadbare or ragged dress.

Scanty as was the help derived from these sources, the missionaries on Tahiti were thereby provided with some points of contact with the people. They laboured hard to increase and perfect their knowledge of the language, but this was so difficult that not till twenty years after the pioneers had landed was the first book printed.[1]

V

When missionaries go into a land where the language has not yet been reduced to literary form, it is a very great advantage if they have studied a cognate language already written. This course was not open to pioneers of an early date, such as the men mentioned in the previous paragraph. They were the first to undertake a scientific study of a Polynesian language. They found it to differ very considerably in structure from any European form of speech, and, of course, the vocabulary was entirely different. This consideration must intensify our admiration of their indomitable

[1] William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches* (1829), pp. 70–5. Richard Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society* (1899), vol. i., pp. 117–215.

efforts and of their success. Nowadays the majority of Polynesian languages have been studied comparatively, and the acquisition of any fresh one would be a relatively simple matter.

In Africa, too, most of the languages spoken south of the Equator comprise a family many of whose members do not differ more from each other than, say, Dutch from English, or even Italian from Spanish. And just as he who knows one Latin speech finds it easy to acquire another, because the structure and the vocabulary are so very similar, so anyone who knows one of these Bantu tongues has no great difficulty in learning another, even though it may not be written.

If I may refer to my own experience, this was my happy lot.

When I went to Northern Rhodesia in 1902, I had already spent several years in South Africa, and had learnt two of the Bantu languages, Suto and Xosa. We travelled north from Bulawayo to the Zambezi in an ox-wagon, a journey which occupied fifty-three days. On the north side of the river we found a company of about two hundred men who had come down from the Ila country to carry our goods and chattels. I was intensely interested in those men—fine, strapping, robust fellows—for they were the first I had seen of my future parishioners. At that time their language had not yet been reduced to writing ; they possessed no alphabet, no book. I could not speak to them, nor could they speak to me. We had before us a twelve days' march—my wife to be carried in a hammock, and I to walk ; and I thought it would be an excellent opportunity to learn something of this strange tongue.

I was fortunate to find that one of the men knew a few words of a debased variety of Suto, and I instantly marked him as my teacher. On the first day's march, when we rested during the hours of great heat, I called him apart, and we sat together in the shade. I produced a notebook, and pointing to a tree, I said, "What do you call that in Suto?" He replied correctly: "*Sefate,* my father." "How do you say it in your own language?" I asked. "*Isamo,*" he said; and the words "*isamo* = a tree" were at once written down in my notebook. "How do you say *lifate* (trees)?" was the next question, and the answer came, "*Masamo.*" In half an hour I had secured a number of words and several phrases. Then we resumed our march, and I took every opportunity of airing my newly-acquired knowledge. Next day, when I wished to resume my studies during the rest-hours, I found my teacher recalcitrant. "Sir," he said reproachfully, "how can I teach you my language when my stomach is empty and my teeth are clean?" He meant that he was hungry. I had seen him eating a hearty meal of several pounds of meat, so I knew that the excuse was baseless, but I did not press him. My lessons terminated abruptly, but not before I had learnt a few words, and, above all, that priceless phrase, *Chinzhi chechi?* ("What is this?") With that question I pestered everybody, pointing to this thing and that, handling one thing and another, and asking morning, noon, and night, "*Chinzhi chechi?*" "*Chinzhi chechi?*" until I came to be voted an intolerable nuisance. And every word so acquired was duly recorded in my notebook. Thus I took the first steps on a pilgrimage that closed,

THE MASTER'S
SANTA

for me, some thirteen years later when the whole of the New Testament (part of it translated by my colleague, John W. Price) was printed in this Ila language by the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The great majority of the six hundred forms of speech into which the Scriptures have been rendered were originally acquired in some such manner as I have described.

It will be obvious that much is missing from this chapter. Some of the interstices will be filled when we come to later chapters. Meanwhile, we must deal with some preliminary matters.

CHAPTER II

THE SHRINE OF A PEOPLE'S SOUL

I

WHY do missionaries spend so much energy and time in acquiring unwritten as well as literary languages? The obvious answer is that they have a very important message to deliver, and they are convinced that this can only be understood and accepted if it is conveyed in the language of the people to whom it is addressed.

We have spoken hitherto mainly of missionaries. But this is a matter that concerns, in a greater or less degree, all who need to understand, and desire to influence in any way, the peoples with whom they come into contact: administrators, traders, colonists, travellers.

We Britons are much too inclined to think that everybody should speak English. We are apt to get angry if they do not. How much trade we lose because we send out agents who cannot converse fluently in foreign languages, and because our correspondence and circulars are written in English, cannot be computed.

The folly of this attitude was pointed out by the Prince of Wales in a speech delivered for the British Industries Fair in February 1927. He told of a letter which he had received from a resident in Argentina.

He went into an up-country store and heard a man ask for a tin of paint. He was shown a tin of

English paint, but, unfortunately, the directions on the wrapper were written in English only, and neither the storeman nor the customer could understand our language. He was then shown a German tin, which bore directions for use, written in Spanish as well as in German.

Naturally, the customer took the German paint in preference to the English.

I only mention this simple case [said the Prince] because it is illustrative of how easily trade can be lost in this tremendously competitive world that we live in, if things are not made as easy as possible for the buyer.

As regards the value to the administrator of knowing languages, I cannot do better than quote the following :

Successful administration by an alien whose thoughts, morals, and motives move on a different plane from the people's he rules is built, not on the personal ideas of the administrator, but on his knowledge of the nature of the humans he is called upon to govern. He must think Hausa before he can rule Hausas. . . . Before he can think Hausa, however, he must learn to speak Hausa. That is, he must get outside the associations and implications of his own western language and bring himself within the limitations of native mentality. He must abolish the laconisms of western speech in favour of the circumlocution dear to the Oriental mind.[1]

If in the realm of commerce things must be made as easy as possible for the buyer by employing his,

[1] J. Withers Gill, " Hausa Speech: Its Wit and Wisdom," in *The Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, vol. i. p. 32.

and not the vendor's, language; if before an administrator can rule Hausas (or any other folk) he must think Hausa, and before he can think Hausa must learn to speak Hausa; how supremely important it must be for missionaries and educationists—all who aim at conveying truth to others—to learn the language of the people whom they seek to teach!

This is so obvious that it would seem to require no argument to enforce it. Yet it is unfortunately not universally accepted, and it will be worth while to expound it more fully, first by examining the alternatives.

When the teacher comes face to face with foreigners he may follow one of four courses: (1) he may learn their language; (2) he may teach them his own language; (3) he may instruct them through an interpreter; (4) he may employ an intermediate jargon which is neither their language nor his own.

II

The question as to the extent to which they should teach English or teach in English is one that divides missionaries. No doubt there are reasons why young Africans and Indians and Polynesians should learn the language—English, or French, or whatever it may be—that is spoken by the Europeans who have assumed rule over them. It opens to them wider intellectual horizons by enabling them to read great literature. And if they go out from their narrow circle into the wider life of the world, they are at a dis-

advantage if the only tongue they can speak is a small vernacular.

But this large educational problem is not the one we are now considering.[1] We are thinking of a missionary who comes among a people with the desire to present to them the Gospel of Christ; and the question—leaving aside, for the moment, interpretation and pidgin-English—is, Shall he learn and use their language; or shall he teach them his language, and use it in his ministrations? In other words: shall one man (or a few men) learn a fresh language, or shall thousands? To a practical person the question surely permits of but one answer. To teach a whole population English would need many years; to learn their language is a simple matter of a year or two. Once he has mastered their tongue, his message can reach the whole people. It may be added that, even should he decide to use his own language, the missionary would need to learn the vernacular in order to employ it as a medium for teaching English.

We may, therefore, rule out one of the alternatives before us.

III

It is generally the case that when white men and coloured come into contact and are compelled to communicate with each other, neither class learns the language of the other with any great degree of accuracy. I am not speaking now of deliberate attempts at teaching and learning in schools. Nor in what follows have I in mind the inevitable grotesque mistakes made

[1] See Chapter IV., Section 3.

by learners of strange tongues. I am considering the jargon that grows up through the intercourse of traders with Natives. Neither Natives nor traders are concerned with grammatical accuracy, with stylistic purity. All they require is a vehicle for commercial or other intercourse. One of the jargons they use is called pidgin-English.[1]

North, south, east, and west, we find this queer hotch-potch. Mr. Stefansson tells us, for example, that very few white men in the Frozen North learn the language of the Eskimos.

I have known in Alaska white men who have been married to Eskimo women for over thirty years, and whose grandchildren are now growing up, and yet they have acquired so little of the Eskimo language that when their own wives talk to their own children they have no idea of what they are saying.

The jargon used in intercourse between Europeans and Eskimos consists of a few English words, a few from the South Sea Islands, a word or two from Spanish and from Danish, and a number of Eskimo words. The vocabulary varies from three hundred to five hundred words in all. There being no inflections, this "language" is easy to learn—can, in fact, be picked up in a week. It serves for the expression of the ordinary simple ideas concerning the everyday life of the North; but—and these words of Mr Stefansson should be noted—it is "quite incapable of expressing any fine shades of thought, and those who know it only, get the impression of the Eskimos

[1] The Oxford Dictionary says that "pidgin" is a corruption of "business."

that their minds are more impoverished and their thoughts cruder than is really the case." [1]

A similar jargon has grown up on the west coast of Africa ; it is there named Kru-English since it sprang from the intercourse of white men with the Kru-men, who are famous for their skill as boatmen. One of the best specimens I have seen of it is contained in a government proclamation issued to the Natives of a territory which had been wrested from the Germans. It reads in part as follows :

All boys belongina all place, you savvy. Big feller master, he come now. He new feller master. He strong feller. All ship stop place. He small feller ship belongina him ; plenty more big feller. He stop place belongina him now. He come here. He take him all place. He look out good alonga him. Supposing other feller master, he been speak you, " you no work alonga new feller master." He gammon. . . . You took him new feller flag. You savvy him, he belong British English. He more better than other feller.

The gibberish that serves for communication between Chinese and Europeans, who do not trouble to learn each the other's language, is another variety of pidgin-English. " What's all the row about ? " an Englishman asks his servant. " Butcher kill piggee, piggee no likee ! " is the answer. Johnnie Robison, a famous Shanghai sportsman, when about to ride a very lazy pony in a race, was thus, it is said, addressed by his Chinese groom : " Mister Lobison, Mister

[1] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, pp. 354–9.

Lobison ! You kick him belly plenty, you flog him bottom too muchee, *must* makee win ! "

In the South Seas Bêche-de-mer English is spoken —so called because it originated on the boats engaged in fishing for bêche-de-mer, or trepang, a kind of sea-slug. It is a weird kind of speech, full of strange circumlocutions due to poverty of vocabulary. If you are hungry you say, " Stomach belong me walk about plenty." " Thimble " becomes " hat belong finger " ; " envelope " becomes " trousers belong letter " ; " horseshoe " becomes " boot belong horse." A man may say to his servant, " You been see my towel belong letter ? " which, being interpreted, means, " Have you seen my blotting-paper ? "

In many parts of the world, therefore, we meet this curious hotch-potch of a lingo that we call pidgin-English.[1] It presents everywhere a remarkable degree of uniformity, in structure, if not in pronunciation. It is used not only in intercourse between Europeans and Natives. Modern commercial enterprise brings together Natives from many localities who cannot understand each other's mother-tongue, and in many cases they converse in pidgin-English. It is not a transient phenomenon : evidently it has come to stay, as a kind of Esperanto, or universal language. *The Times'* own correspondent reported on 3rd November 1927, from Canberra, that a conference of officers of the New Guinea administration with representatives of missionary societies in the territory had recom-

[1] An analogous corruption of French is named " petit-nègre." It is spoken, e.g., in West African French colonies. One hears sentences like *moi pas craindre lui ; moi vouloir manger viande.*

mended the adoption of pidgin-English as the language for general use in that multi-lingual country.

If we reviewed past history we might find many instances of similar occurrences. When the Roman legions came into contact with ancient Gauls there grew up a pidgin-Latin that would have horrified Cicero as greatly as pidgin-English horrifies us. That lingo has developed into French. It may very well be that in the pidgin-English of to-day we see the rude beginnings of what will become a highly cultivated language with a Shakespeare, a Milton, a Balzac, of its own.

But we live in the present. And the question we have to answer is, Should a missionary use pidgin-English in his teaching? Can he use it, if he respects his message, respects the intelligence of the people, respects his own mother-tongue? If there were no alternative, he might degrade himself to such a low expedient, but with the possibility of utilizing a rich vernacular, can we imagine him hesitating in his choice? Traders may employ pidgin-English, a government may issue proclamations in it, an anthropologist may even use it in his investigations (though personally we should mistrust information gained in that way), but we cannot conceive of a missionary using it, whose business it is to speak to the heart of a people.

IV

It remains to consider the method of interpretation. Instead of addressing your audience directly in their own tongue you speak in your own, and a person with a more or less perfect knowledge of both languages

translates your speech, more or less accurately, into the language of the audience.

Without doubt some wonderful results are often achieved. In a great international gathering an orator will pour forth his eloquent periods, while the interpreter perhaps writes the speech down in shorthand, or takes notes, and at the conclusion stands forth and reproduces it in another language—perhaps in two languages successively—with little or no loss of meaning. This calls for gifts of a very special kind, an alertness and celerity of mind quite out of the ordinary, a knowledge of the subject under discussion equal perhaps to that possessed by the original speaker, and a perfect knowledge of the two or three languages. In an international gathering men are present who could, if necessary, correct any false impression conveyed by the interpreter. But even at its best, interpretation is a poor substitute for direct intercourse.

The conditions I have described cannot be present always when a missionary, or other foreigner, is addressing an audience through an interpreter. A homogeneity of culture marks the international gathering which does not mark the missionary and his hearers; the interpreter's knowledge of English is probably very faulty; he is not highly trained; there may be no person present capable of noticing and correcting his mistakes; and, moreover, it is much easier to translate from, say, French into English, from German into Italian, than to translate from English into an African, Asiatic, or Polynesian language whose genius is so very different.

We cannot therefore argue from successes gained at Geneva ; we must treat interpretation in the mission field as a separate question. What are our objections to the employment of an interpreter by a missionary ?

I knew a sergeant-major who always spoke of the French interpreter attached to our section of the army as "the interrupter." The old soldier spoke perhaps more wisely than he knew. Interpretation *is* interruption. An interpreter is a spiritual non-conductor. The rays of influence that should pass in their power direct from speaker to hearer become distorted as they pass through the alien medium. Given the disparity in experience between preacher and interpreter, the difference in their thought-forms, it is inevitable that the content of the message changes in its passage from one through the other. Not knowing the language of the people whom he is addressing, the speaker thinks in his own, throws his thoughts into the shapes to which he is accustomed. Ignorant of the mind of his audience, he does not adapt his speech ; he may address them in abstract forms which are alien to their mentality, or, even worse, may address them in baby-talk which is an insult to their intelligence. It is asking too much of the ordinary interpreter to expect him to transmute on the spur of the moment a whole discourse into the idiom of the people's mind. Moreover, the interpreter may not hear correctly, or may misunderstand a metaphor, and the speaker is incapable of correcting the wrong impressions given to the audience.

"Say something to the congregation this morning."

said an old missionary to a young man who had not yet learnt Chinese, "and I will interpret for you." The novice began: "My friends, truth is relative and absolute." "He says," interpreted the man of experience, "that he is very glad to see you."

When travellers are compelled by force of circumstances to employ three or four interpreters it is no wonder that they get into difficulties. But sentences passed through only one interpreter may assume a very different complexion. A certain Governor of a British territory once visited a remote district and addressed an assembly of tribesmen. A native clerk interpreted, whose English was quite adequate for his ordinary simple office duties, but was unequal to his Excellency's oration on the subject of changes in administration. One sentence ran somewhat as follows: "I propose to advance by a road which will offer all people an opportunity for taking part in the development of the country, according to their abilities for the present." The highly gratified tribesmen received it in this form: "I intend to walk down the road offering every man what he wants, as a present." Happily, such a gross error was obvious to those members of the Governor's staff who possessed a slight knowledge of the language, and a disappointing correction damped the enthusiasm of the tribe. But, says our authority for the incident, it "left an uneasy feeling that other less glaring but equally serious mistakes might well have passed undetected." And he adds: "It is depressing to reflect upon the number of grave misunderstandings, and even disturbances,

which can on analysis be attributed simply to bad interpreting." [1]

There are men—they call themselves missionaries—who, after ten or even twenty or thirty years of residence, have never mastered the local language; they cannot sustain the simplest conversation; they cannot so much as offer a prayer at the bedside of a dying native Christian. Such men are at the mercy of the interpreters through whom they preach. They have no means of knowing the form in which their instruction and exhortation reaches the people: what unorthodoxies, what complete misapprehensions of Christian truth, they have planted in the minds of their congregations.

I was present once at a large meeting in South Africa at which an old missionary spoke to an African audience through an interpreter. He waxed very eloquent. At one point he urged upon the Native Christians the duty of sending to others the Gospel which had done so much for themselves. "Be prepared," he cried, "to make sacrifices on behalf of your heathen fellow-countrymen." Very right, and very eloquent, but how did it sound in the ears of the audience? The interpreter put it: "Go and prepare sacrifices on behalf of your heathen fellow-countrymen"—using the word applied to the pagan sacrifices to ancestral spirits. I was young then, but I felt it my duty to intervene.

The late M. Jacottet, one of the most learned of French missionaries in Basutoland, told me that he

[1] Major G. St J. Orde Browne, "On Some Aspects of Interpreting," in *The Journal of the African Society*, July 1926.

once invited an English visitor to preach in his church, and offered to translate the sermon. To his horror he discovered, as soon as the preacher began his discourse, that he was a religious crank and was about to exhibit doctrines that it was not good for that audience to hear. "What did you do?" I asked M. Jacottet. "Well, to tell the truth," he answered, "I let him go on, and while he preached one sermon, I preached another. He was quite satisfied, for he did not understand what I was saying; I was satisfied, and so were my people."

There is another serious aspect of this subject. The man who is content to go on year after year employing an interpreter, not only cannot enter into the mind of his people, he is liable to misunderstand them, to do them serious injustice by under-rating their intelligence, and by misinterpreting their motives.

We may illustrate this fact by referring to what sometimes takes place in a law-court in South Africa. A well-informed writer declares: "A native who attends, in whatsoever capacity, before a tribunal presided over by a European is in peril." It is true, of course, that the magistrate often knows the Native language, but this writer is thinking of tribunals where neither magistrate nor counsel, but only the interpreter, is familiar with it. Certain statements damaging to the defendant's case are made by one of the plaintiff's witnesses—a Native. Counsel for the defence rises to shake his story, to test his credibility, to entrap him into admissions. "For a shrewd witness this has no terrors. He is prepared and armed at all points. The language is his own; he sees the

traps and avoids them. Quite otherwise is the plight of the native witness." His language contains no definite or indefinite article; but, according to the shorthand notes, he has committed himself to the statement that a certain event occurred "the day before yesterday," whereas, so the lawyer discovers, it occurred "*a* day before yesterday"—last week, in fact. Or perhaps the witness has said, in his idiom, that it happened "last moon," and the interpreter rendered it "last month." Since "moon" and (calendar) "month" do not necessarily coincide, it is easy to show what a liar the man is! He says that his "father" was present; but the lawyer proves positively that the witness's father was dead at the time: what a liar the fellow is! Whereas, when he said "my father" in his own tongue he really meant "my paternal uncle"—the two words being synonymous. "Counsel shows to the satisfaction of the Court that the witness repeatedly contradicts himself, and is consequently unreliable—another born liar, in fact. He is solemnly told that he is fortunate in escaping prosecution for perjury, and leaves the Court with a reputation torn to tatters." [1]

How many libels on African and other peoples rest on evidence as baseless as that! One ought to learn to suspect all statements made by people who do not know the language of the folk about whom they are speaking.

Men who employ interpreters have been known to

[1] H. M. G. J., "On Interpretation and Mendacity," in *Nada*, the Southern Rhodesia Native Affairs Department Annual (1926), p. 121.

complain, not only of the mendacity but also of the poverty of intellect of their hearers, when, in reality, it is the speaker who is at fault. An early missionary in Mashonaland wrote :

> Men, women, and children listened eagerly to the strange Gospel, but the simple truths of the Bible were utterly beyond them. I had clever interpreters, and as clearly as I could I told them the " old, old story " of redemption, but even this was above their grasp : I spoke of sin, repentance, and forgiveness : they only smiled and looked puzzled. [1]

This reads like a condemnation of the stupidity of these Africans. It is really a condemnation of the stupidity of the missionary who expects to be able to instruct through interpreters. Suppose the tables were turned, and an African, who knew nothing of the mentality of the English, and not a word of our language, endeavoured to instruct a company of English people in the mystery of African religion through an interpreter with a limited knowledge of the African language—might he not as reasonably say : The simple truth of our religion was utterly beyond them ; they only smiled and looked puzzled ?

Unfamiliar truths can only be comprehended as they are linked on to something already familiar to the hearers. Unless a man will take the trouble to enter the thought-world of the people he seeks to instruct—and this he can only accomplish as he knows their language—he must not call them stupid if they fail to understand him.

[1] Findlay and Holdsworth, *The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society* (1922), vol. iv. p. 384.

V

When John Williams, one of the greatest of modern missionaries, arrived in the island of Rarotonga, he found that the mission had made little progress; and he concluded that it was because a foreign tongue, Tahitian, was being used in the schools. As soon as Rarotongan was adopted, and a literature was created in this, the mother-tongue of the islanders, Christianity began to take root and grow. Out of this and other experiences John Williams declared: "I think it a circumstance of very rare occurrence that a religious impression is produced upon the minds of a people, except by addressing them in their mother-tongue."[1]

There are exceptions, apparent exceptions at least, to the rule. Otto, Bishop of Bamberg, the evangelist of Pomerania, is celebrated as "the most successful missionary in mediæval times"; yet, it is said, he was never able to speak to Pomeranians in their own language, but had to rely upon the service of interpreters. St Bernard's biographer says that when the saint preached to German tribes he was heard with rapt attention, although they were unable to understand his language, and depended entirely on such fragments as interpreters conveyed to them. In our own days the West African prophet, William Wade Harris, who made more converts than any other evangelist in Africa has ever made, preached through interpreters.[2]

[1] John Williams, *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* (1841), p. 104.

[2] See an article in *The Church Times*, 19th August 1927, on "The Plague of Tongues."

But these are the triumphs of exceptional personalities, and even in regard to them there are questions we should like to ask. They cannot be taken as a rule for us ordinary people.

The missionary aims at influencing, not the shallows of a people's life, but the deepest depths—to touch the springs of conduct, to reach down to the innermost recesses of their being. There is no path to the heart save through the mother-tongue. The mother-tongue! That in which the mother croons lullabies over the cradle, that in which the infant learns to lisp, that in which he first learns to pray at his mother's knee, that in which he jokes and plays with his fellows, that in which the youth whispers words of love into his sweetheart's ear, that which enters into all the most sacred memories of a man's life! The mother-tongue—the music of the heart and home! Even scholars who read Greek and Hebrew with ease, confess that the English version of the Bible speaks to their heart with more power than the original. And what English is to us, their mother-tongue is to other folk. Men may learn many languages, but they pray in their own, as they make love in their own. Whenever they wish to express what is deepest in them they use the speech they drew in with their mother's milk. And when the Gospel comes to them in those hallowed tones (we say it, notwithstanding any exceptions that may be offered) it comes with a power it can never have in an alien tongue. An African Bishop, who was well versed in our English, declared that God had never spoken to him save in his own language. Mr George Allen tells of South American Indians who will listen

stolidly, with their hats on, to an open-air address delivered in a language not their own (though they know it), but as soon as they hear the sound of their own tongue they at once bare their heads.

Every language is a temple in which the soul of the people who speak it is enshrined. Differences of speech reflect deeper differences of tradition, environment, outlook. This is true even while we acknowledge that fundamentally the human heart is one. There are differences between men in temperament, in ways of thinking and expression. It is not meaningless to speak of the soul of a people in this sense; and that soul finds expression in the language. The soul of a people is a precious thing. If it is sinful to exterminate them bodily, it is no less sinful to destroy their individuality.

The last tragedy for broken nations is not the loss of power and distinction, nor even the loss of that independence which is so vital to the common weal. It is not, perhaps, even the loss of country, though there is no harder thing than to see the smoke of the stranger, or to hear upon the wind the forlorn business of the going of those who are dispossessed and the coming of those new in possession. The last tragedy, and the saddest, is when the treasured language dies slowly out, when winter falls upon the legendary remembrance of a people.[1]

The whole tendency in our modern days is for the stronger nations, such as Britain, France, and the

[1] Fiona Macleod, *The Winged Destiny, etc.* (vol. v. of the uniform pocket edition of his works), p. 223. He is writing particularly of "the old Gaelic race."

United States, to overwhelm the weaker—to annihilate their culture, to swamp their language. This makes not for the enrichment but for the impoverishment of humanity. Losing its native speech, a people loses its continuity with the past and sinks to intellectual helotry. This is one reason why missionaries should do everything in their power not only to conserve but to develop the Native languages.

And again we insist that the mother-tongue is the key which unlocks the door of a people's heart. It is the road which leads to an understanding of their mind. It is the bridge across the gulf that yawns between their soul and our own. Unless and until you can speak to them, man to man, heart to heart, soul to soul, you can never attain to that intimate sympathy which is based upon knowledge and which gives you the right to influence them.

So long as Christianity is presented to a people in European terms, under European forms, it must remain an exotic faith to them. It may gain a certain prestige as the religion of a powerful race, but sooner or later their national spirit rises, and they revolt against the domination of an alien culture. They come to see that they too are a people, and they will cherish resentment against all who have conspired to rob them of their heritage. Unless by that time Christianity has become deeply rooted in their souls, they will turn from it as a foreign and therefore a hateful institution. And it will never be so rooted unless it be presented to them in the terms of their own thought and expressed in their own speech.

It is for these reasons that missionaries labour to acquire strange tongues, to reduce them, if necessary, to written form, to create the beginnings of a vernacular literature, and to crown their work by translating the Holy Scriptures.

CHAPTER III

WHAT BABEL MEANS

I

"THE longest and blackest shadow ever cast on earth," it has been said, "is the shadow that was cast by the Tower of Babel."

Were we not convinced on other grounds of the working of a benevolent purpose in the world, we might conclude that some malignant fate had ordained language to be the great divider of mankind. More effectually than seas and mountains, the barriers of speech separate men into potentially, if not actually, hostile camps. We travel in foreign lands, and however keen our curiosity, however sincere our sympathy, however eager we may be to fraternize with the inhabitants, our ignorance of their language, and their ignorance of ours, form an insurmountable obstacle to friendship. We not only fail to understand each other; we misunderstand. This inability to comprehend and communicate keeps people apart; slight differences of opinion and purpose become magnified; the flames of passion are fed by ignorance; a state of hostility is created, which in the end may lead to war. The spread of a common culture is hindered—fresh ideas travel slowly. Considerations of this kind led Dr Zamenhof to invent his international language, Esperanto, as a step towards reversing the curse of Babel.

The Christian missionary, the diplomatist, the administrator of backward peoples, the trader, are all faced by the practical difficulties created by this diversity of language. We may see below the surface and recognize, in the quaint phrase used by a Greek Christian when writing in English to the Bible Society, that "the gabs are many but the ghost is one"—that, in other words, mankind is bound together in a fundamental unity despite all divergencies of expression. We believe that the ultimate truth is so profound that it cannot be explored by any one people, nor expressed in any single language; and that out of the present confusion there will emerge in God's good time a greater unity of thought and purpose. But it cannot be denied that the present state of things is baffling. It calls to us to exert all our powers to overcome the difficulties; and perhaps it is precisely through our resolute efforts that the full purpose of God will be realized in us. We live in a world where things are not made easy—where, on the contrary, the best is only attained by dint of hard thinking and hard work. It is in the surmounting of obstacles that we find our true selves.

II

No man can say how many forms of speech are current to-day upon the earth. The answer depends, for one thing, on what is meant by "a language" and what by "a dialect." Language comes into existence, some would say, only with the growth of poetry or the invention of writing; before that time there are only dialects. If the distinction be that one

is literary and the other illiterate, then the languages of the world are but few, the dialects very numerous. Others would say that a dialect is a subordinate variety of a standard language—Yorkshire, for example, a dialect of English. But at the same time it may be said that English itself is a dialect of an assumed Teutonic parent language, just as Italian, Spanish, and French are dialects of Latin. Latin, again, would be a dialect of the original Indo-European language. We speak of the Bantu languages of Africa and say that they number three or four hundred ; but in the wider sense, each of these, being a branch of the hypothetical parent speech from which they all sprang, is a dialect of that language. Some scholars would say that languages are forms of speech that are mutually unintelligible, as are Italian and Spanish, German and Greek ; while dialects are such that the speaker of one can understand the speaker of another. If that is so, then many idioms which are commonly called dialects must be classed as languages. The terms bear no fixed meaning. We speak also of " vernaculars," [1] and in common usage the word is synonymous with " the vulgar tongue," the mother-speech of a people. But properly the term should be employed, as it is in Italian, of the form of speech which is used in a very restricted area ; thus we should speak of the Sheffield vernacular of the Yorkshire dialect of the English language.

[1] The word derives from the Latin *verna*, " a home-born slave " ; *vernaculus*, of or belonging to home-born slaves, hence native, domestic, indigenous. In Italian *vernacolo* (which at one time was equivalent to *verna*) is the sub-dialect of a common language.

If we tried to count up the languages, dialects, and vernaculars of the world, we should never come to an end. It might well be argued, indeed, that as many forms of speech exist as there are individuals, for each person has his idiosyncrasies ; no two persons speak exactly alike, any more than their countenances are alike.

Let us illustrate.

Not everybody realizes that six languages are spoken in the British Isles, namely, English, Welsh, Manx, Gaelic, Erse, and Norman-French. Welsh, Manx, Gaelic, and Erse may be called Celtic dialects, but since they are mutually unintelligible—a Manxman speaking his own tongue would not be understood by a Gael—we may call them languages. There is now in these islands one form of speech, a lingua franca or common tongue, which is, through the spread of education, understood by the great majority : we name it English. Of this there are many dialects—eleven at least south of the Tweed, but nobody has as yet succeeded in mapping them with precision.

If the test of mutual intelligibility be applied, we might find reason to label some of these dialects as "languages." I remember visiting a remote village on the borders of Lancashire and Yorkshire where I was totally unable to understand what was said to me ; I might have been in a foreign land. There is a legend that two men went up to a certain divinity school, one from Somerset and the other from Lancashire, and they had to ask for an interpreter, since neither could make out what the other said.

The pronunciation of common words varies enor-

mously in these English dialects. There are twenty-nine ways of saying "through" and "clothes"; thirty-five pronunciations of "cucumber" and "father"; forty-four ways of saying "home." There are diversities of grammatical form. Instead of "beasts" and "posts" you may hear *beastez*, *postez*, or even *beastezez*, *postezez*. A triple plural, e.g. *nestsezez*, "nests," is found in Sussex. In South Yorkshire they say *nizn*, for "nests"; in East Yorkshire *klūtn* for "clouts"; in Hampshire, *wopsn* for "wasps." Differences in the pronouns are very frequent; in the Midlands one hears "Let's be off tul us dinners."

Little as we may be conscious of it, therefore, a great diversity of speech exists in our own land. It is easy to realize how difficult a foreigner travelling through our country districts will find it to understand what is said to him. What will he make of the following in Yorkshire? "If thar wearnt odd thar noise oil cop thee syck a follock over th'ee as thar niver add in thee loife afoore." [1]

It is just as difficult for the Englishman who travels abroad. He may find that for all his fluent and accurate speaking of French or Italian, as taught in the schools, he can scarcely understand what is said to him, nor be able to express himself intelligibly to the inhabitants.

There are a score or more of dialects (or should we say "languages"?) in Italy, and each one is subdivided into a number of purely local *vernacoli*. Fortunately, many of these dialects have in some

[1] *Word-lore, the Folk Magazine*, vol. ii., No. 5, p. 119.

measure been recorded. Like our English dialects, they are not uncouth, barbarian forms of speech, mere degenerations from a superior language; they are rich and expressive. It is only necessary to read Grace Warrack's very charming collection of folk-songs to realize that fact.[1]

What we have said of the British Isles and of Italy may serve to illustrate the situation encountered in other parts of the world. Except for the growth and spread of great literary languages, mankind knows nothing of linguistic uniformity.

In North America, an early authority enumerated fifty-eight separate linguistic stocks, or families of speech, each "as distinct from one another in their vocabularies, and apparently in their origin, as from the Aryan or the Scythian families." More recent research has reduced the number to fifty-five. Some of these are now extinct, others partially so. Of California Mr Verrill says: "In no other equal area of the surface of the globe were so many distinct dialects in use."[2]

In Africa, the traveller discovers new forms of speech every few miles along his road. Among the ten millions of people living in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria, more than two hundred and fifty different languages are spoken, of the greater number of which no vocabulary has been published.[3] The Bauchi plateau, part of this area, is a kind of tribal maelstrom,

[1] Grace Warrack, *Dal Cor Gentil d'Italia, Canti dal Veneto alla Sardegna* (1925).

[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. xiv., article "Indians, North American." A. Hyatt Verrill, *The American Indian* (1927), p. 349.

[3] C. K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria* (1925), vol. ii. p. 132.

where no fewer than a hundred and ten languages, or dialects, may be heard. Of the Bantu languages and dialects, which prevail over most of the continent south of the Sudan, Sir H. H. Johnston has recorded three hundred and sixty-six in his monumental *Comparative Study*, and this number is far from being exhaustive.

The difficulties caused to missionaries by this exuberance of African speech may be gathered from an article by a Congo missionary, Mrs Palmer of Yalemba. She writes :

The variety of languages in our district has been rather a handicap to the extension of our work. Of course there is a similarity of construction in all Bantu languages, and an occasional similarity in words, but there is a great difference between them ; they are languages, not dialects. Even locally we are almost a Tower of Babel in ourselves. Bandio village on our east speaks two languages, the Likili and the Baengelema, which are different from each other and from that spoken by Yalemba ; while in between the two we speak Heso, the language of Basoko and the Arua. Just beyond Yalemba is the village of Yaolo, whose language resembles Heso. Several of our boys and workmen come from Ilondo and from the Lohogi and the big Topoke areas—three more languages ; others are of the Bongando tribe, and speak a language somewhat akin to Lokele. Then we have one man from Uganda ! We ourselves have learnt two native languages—Heso and Lingala ; the latter is the lingua franca of the area extending from Stanleyville to Kinshasa, and we use it wherever Heso is not understood.

Herewith is a translation of the sentence, " Our

Father which art in heaven." It probably contains more resemblances than are usually found in conversational speech :

Heso :	Ise oho iso oho eisi la lobola.
Lingala :	Tata na biso oyo ajali na likolo.
Yalemba :	Ise ya iso yoho ambe ta lobola.
Likili :	Apa oso oto ale e ngalima.
Baengelema :	Abo o aho i a angali.
Ilondo :	Sango ya su oyo ale la lobola.
Topoke :	Ise ha oso oho e ho lola.
Lohogi :	Ise ha iso aho engae ho lola.
Bongando :	Ise niso oko ayali ena liko.

We are frankly envious of stations where one, or even two, main languages are adequate ; for the complexity around us has this disadvantage. We seldom understand what is said by our people talking amongst themselves, so we cannot readily get the insight we should into native thought and native method of expression.[1]

Sir G. A. Grierson, the chief authority, states that five main linguistic families are represented among the three hundred and twenty million inhabitants of India ; and he gives the names of a hundred and seventy-nine languages and five hundred and forty-four dialects—in all, seven hundred and twenty-three forms of speech. Some of these are spoken by millions of people, others are the tribal tongues of a few thousands. Some parts of India present a bewildering confusion of speech. Burma contains some fifteen million people. At least eight main groups of languages are indigenous to the country, and these

[1] Mrs Palmer, "Tongues : Some Reflections Thereon," in *The Herald* of the Baptist Missionary Society.

are divided and subdivided in a perplexing manner. Of one language, Chin, twenty-seven dialects have been enumerated—dialects spoken by tribes which number on an average from five to ten thousand, and nearly all these forms of speech are mutually unintelligible.

Assam is another multilingual district. A village may be divided between two clans, each of which speaks its own tongue, though living not twenty yards apart. It must be very inconvenient to have two languages in one village. Mr Mills relates a tale which shows the misunderstandings which may arise. In a certain village, a Chongli man and a Mongsen quarrelled about the ownership of a clump of bamboos, called in Mongsen *changpurong*. The Mongsen man kept shouting about these bamboos, and the Chongli man, mishearing him, thought he was shouting *changpong*, the Chongli word for a frog. He jumped to the not unnatural conclusion that his opponent was insulting him, and brought him into court. The Mongsen man was fined a pig, and his clan, thinking such misunderstandings expensive, gave up their mother-speech and took to Chongli. But in other villages the two languages still exist side by side ; each " khel " knows its neighbour's language but keeps to its own. A woman of the Mongsen " khel " married to a Chongli man will speak Mongsen to her husband but Chongli to her baby, for the child belongs to its father's clan and must be brought up to talk his language.[1]

If we turn now to the islands of the Southern Seas we meet a situation that almost baffles description.

[1] J. P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas* (1926), p. 3.

Of Melanesia, Miss Combe says: "Every island, however small, in every group, has developed its separate speech, too distinct from all others to be lightly set down as a different dialect. And in an island of any size there are to be found tongues so various that those on the lee side cannot converse with those on the weather side, nor those in the interior with those upon the coast." [1]

Malekula, in the New Hebrides, is about sixty miles long and about twenty broad, and has as satellites several mere dots of islets. In this little group fifteen dialects have been recorded; as you pass from village to village you will hear nine distinct words for "man" and seven words for "woman." [2]

Confusion becomes still more confounded when sections of a single community each possesses a peculiar idiom. Mr Barbrooke Grubb [3] tells us, for example, that the South American Indians "have one form of speech when addressing men and another when speaking to women." When he preached to a mixed audience, the Indians considered it necessary that he should address a statement first to the men and then to the women. "So cumbersome and time-wasting were these peculiarities that a sermon which need only have taken half an hour occupied an hour." If you are speaking to a woman you may say *Kato ikto*, "eat thy food"; but to a man you say *Ito apto*.

[1] Florence Combe, *Islands of Enchantment* (1911), p. xxii.

[2] S. H. Ray, *A Comparative Study of the Melanesian Island Languages* (1926), pp. 259, 260, 478–81.

[3] W. Barbrooke Grubb, *An Unknown People in an Unknown Land*, p. 319.

The language of Tibet consists practically of two distinct languages existing side by side. There is, first, the language in which you address an inferior and in which the lower classes speak among themselves. In speaking of himself a man always uses this form. Then there is the " honorific " speech in which you address a superior and in which the educated classes converse among themselves. Entirely different words are found in the two kinds of speech.[1]

In more civilized lands, a somewhat similar distinction is found between the speech of classes. " In a city like Paris there are a number of different languages superimposed upon one another. The language of the drawing-room is not that of the barracks, nor the language of the bourgeoisie that of the working-classes ; there is the jargon of the courts, and the argot of the faubourgs. These languages sometimes differ so much among themselves that you may know one of them quite well and yet understand nothing of another." [2] There are social dialects in English : poetical and high literary prose ; normal literary prose (the style of leading articles) ; high colloquial (as when speaking to strangers) ; normal colloquial (as when speaking to intimate friends) ; vulgar colloquial.[3]

This is the shadow of Babel, the longest and blackest shadow ever cast on earth.

[1] Sir G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. iii., part iii.

[2] J. Vendryes, *Language, a Linguistic Introduction to History* (1925), p. 243.

[3] H. E. Palmer, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (1917), p. 62.

CHAPTER IV

UNBABELLING BABEL

I

We begin now to realize something of the magnitude of the task which our Lord entrusted to His apostles when He said: "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

If all the nations are to be taught, it means that first the languages of all nations must be learnt. It means, further, that our Lord's words must be translated into those languages. And this implies that where the languages were not written they must now be written, and that where the people had never been able to read they must now be taught to read. This assertion is founded on the belief that men can only assimilate our Lord's teaching and become effectively acquainted with His person as they are enabled to study in their own tongue the records handed down to us in the New Testament.

This principle is widely, if not universally, accepted, but it is extremely difficult to carry into practice.

We have already stated the reasons why the mother-tongue should be employed. We regard this position as unassailable. But questions arise to which we are bound to find an answer. First: what *is* a man's mother-tongue? To put it concretely: a Yorkshireman's mother-tongue, is it the dialect which he hears

and speaks at home ; or is it the standard English which he learnt at school and now employs in conversation with other educated people, even if he drops into the dialect when speaking to old friends and country customers ? And further we ask : in countries where fresh dialects, not to say fresh languages, are encountered by the score, is a missionary or an administrator, in order to be faithful to the principle we have enunciated, bound to learn every form of speech used by the people with whom he deals ? In England, a Methodist minister may, in the course of his lifetime, be called to serve in many counties, ranging from Cumberland to Cornwall and Kent. He will be brought into contact with hundreds or thousands of folk to whom the literary English of the schools is a strange tongue ; or, if they understand it, they do not speak it with ease. Their home-speech—their birth-tongue, as our forefathers happily named it—is the dialect of the district, and if it be true that the way to a person's heart is through the tongue which he learnt at his mother's knee, does it not follow that the parson, if his ministry is to be most effective, should appeal to these homely folk each in his own dialect ? Ideally this may be the sane method, but practically, is it reasonable or possible ? Converse with every man in his own tongue ! exclaims a Canadian clergyman. He tells of a new-comer to the country who asked a patient in hospital, How did it happen ? This was the answer :

" Well, Padre, it was like this. I was sky hooking for the Potlach Lumber Company and I had only one

mole and he sent me a blue butt—and it was some butt—and I signed him to give it a saint croix; but he sagged it, and he gunned it, and it broke my leg."

"My good man," said the visitor, "really, it is quite beyond me to understand it."

"Padre, that's what everyone says," replied the patient; "they think the guy must have suddenly gone crazy, and I think so too—no one not loco would have done it." [1]

On our principle, you must speak to the backwoodsman in his own lingo, to the peasant in his own dialect, if you wish to reach his soul. The difficulties may be great, may indeed be insurmountable, but there can be no doubt, we think, of the soundness of the principle. The strength of Methodism lay, in old days, in the fact that it used thousands of local preachers who could speak, and did speak, to folk in their homely speech.

But even those people who agree with this so far as the spoken word is concerned, would demur when it is a matter of literature, of education, of the public services of the Church. Would you have then, they ask, a translation of the Bible into every one of the dialects of England and America? Is it not a plain fact of experience that the Scriptures in literary English speak to the heart of country-folk though they are not in their dialect? Should the prayers in Church be offered in the vernacular of the village? Are all text-books and class-teaching to be provided for every group of peasant children in the home-speech? To ask such questions is to answer them.

[1] A correspondent in *The Church Times*, 29th February 1924.

It may well seem to be an absurdity as far as our English dialects are concerned, but the analogous problem in other countries cannot be so lightly dismissed. We are not discussing an academic question, but one that daily exercises the minds of missionaries, educationists, and administrators in many lands. The problem of language is a very real and pressing one. It was vividly brought home to us in the article quoted in our previous chapter.[1] The missionaries at Yalemba, on the Congo, live in the midst of Africans speaking eight or nine languages, which differ more from each other than our English dialects. In a public service people may be gathered who speak at least six mutually unintelligible languages. Shall the Lord's Prayer be repeated in all the forms suggested by Mrs. Palmer? And what is the preacher to do who wishes to travel by the direct way to the hearts of his congregation? Shall he speak six languages in turn? Is he to translate the Scriptures into all these tongues? Are text-books to be provided for all these tribes?

The educationist, be he missionary or Government official, is obsessed by the problem. It hangs about him like a nightmare. The educational programme cannot be complete that does not allow for the provision of literature. Where millions of people speak one language, albeit with some dialectal variation, the task is relatively simple. Books can be prepared, and, as the people learn to read, a demand for them will be created—a demand so great as to warrant, from an economic point of view, money being spent

[1] See pp. 53–4.

on their publication. Native writers will come forward and be encouraged to write by knowing that there is a large reading public that will pay for books. So, in course of time, a real indigenous literature will be created. But in some countries, such as Africa and Oceania, it is not easy to find millions of people speaking a uniform language. There you may have a population of a million, divided into tribes of twenty-five thousand or fifty thousand, each speaking its own tongue. What is to be done for them? The missionary learns the vernacular of a tribe, reduces it to writing, translates into it a Gospel and possibly the whole New Testament, writes a few school-books, but it is impossible to give a small group of people a fully developed literature.

There is another matter to be considered. If schools are opened they must be manned by Native teachers, and these must be trained. They should receive their instruction in the language they will use in teaching their pupils; and this implies that text-books must be provided for use in the classes of the training institution. In a tribe fifty thousand strong the children of school age will number about ten thousand. Suppose —which under present conditions is a liberal estimate —that half of the number attend school; they will need about one hundred teachers. Can an adequate range of educational text-books necessary in the training of teachers be provided for such a limited number as a hundred? In any training school in Africa, or elsewhere, fifty or a hundred students may be found who are drawn from several tribes; they may not understand each other's speech when they

enter the institution. In which of the languages are they to be taught ?

Some authorities believe that a million—others five millions—would constitute the minimum unit for a vernacular literature. If either of these figures be taken there would be very few such units in Africa. What of the smaller folk—are they to be condemned to perpetual illiteracy ?

The International Institute of African Languages and Cultures has said what seems to be the final word on this subject :

> It is clear that to maintain in Africa hundreds of school languages, each with an educational literature of its own, is impossible. . . . For one who tries to understand the trend of modern development in Africa and is thinking of the future, the only alternatives are either a vernacular literature in a limited number of important languages, or no vernacular literature at all.[1]

There is another consideration to be borne in mind.

Suppose, as at one time seemed possible, that each of the main dialectal areas in England had developed its own literature : would not this have made very much more difficult the welding of the whole people into a unity—the creation of the English nation out of several tribes ? The predominance of one dialect over others, as described in a later section of this chapter, was, in fact, a very considerable factor in the unification of England, as it has been, and is, an all-important means of spreading a uniform culture over

[1] " Text-books for African Schools : A Preliminary Memorandum by the Council," *Africa*, vol. i., No. 1, pp. 13–22.

the whole nation. It is the possession of a common speech that largely keeps the British Empire together, and provides a link with the United States. Languages divide—a language unites.

Now the immense variety of languages or dialects which they speak reflects the isolation in which Native tribes lived before western civilization streamed in upon them. In many instances, the only intercommunication of tribe with tribe took the form of war. The difference of speech emphasized, if it did not cause, their separation. Under present conditions the old centripetal force is being replaced by a centrifugal. Men no longer live in isolation; they travel and mix with their fellows of other tribes. As will be noticed presently, out of this intermixture of peoples arise new forms of amalgamated speech. Peoples, formerly separated, are learning to know each other; a national consciousness dawns upon them. Imperialists of the old school who subscribe to the Machiavellian creed of "divide and govern" may look upon this tendency with dread, but however much they may try to stop it, its progress is inevitable and, we believe, for the good of humanity. What effect is the creation of a vernacular literature for small tribes likely to have upon this movement? The writing of books tends to fix speech—may prevent its perishing. Possession of a literature exalts the prestige of the vernacular in the minds of its speakers, and so fosters a parochial patriotism at the expense of a wider nationalism. In some respects the small tribe must suffer by the perpetuation of its language. Its members are placed at a serious disadvantage in their dealings

with the outside world. Let them learn foreign languages, is the inevitable answer. But in a multilingual land, which tongue shall they select? Not only economically, but culturally also, their progress is hindered by clinging to their own mother-speech. Missionaries are legitimately anxious for their people to be proud of the language of their forefathers; such pride is an essential element in the solidarity and ordered progress of the tribe. And, very naturally, the man who has laboured through long years to give it the beginnings of a literature feels keenly if the language is suffered to decay and perish. But may not a rigid clinging to the mother-tongue prove a hindrance to the welfare of the people?

II

After all, the questions of this character which the modern missionary and educationist have to answer are not new. Perhaps a glimpse into past history may enable us to answer some of them. But before we examine any specific instances, some general remarks may be allowed.

Language is an organism and, like all organisms, is subject to laws of growth and decay. A product of the restless, insatiable mind of man, it is constantly changing. The story of our own language reveals this as clearly as any other. A continuity may be traced from the time of King Alfred to the present; but if we could hear Tyndale read a chapter from his translation of the Bible we might think it to be in a foreign language. We should certainly not understand King

Alfred. The shores of time are littered with the corpses of extinct forms of speech. In the days of Herodotus there may have been eighty or a hundred languages spoken in the countries all around the Mediterranean, where to-day there are about a dozen.[1] While some decay others are born. Some exist as "dead" languages for centuries, studied only by scholars, and then, like Hebrew in our own day, suddenly revive and become spoken tongues again. New languages arise through the hiving off of peoples and their estrangement and isolation from the parent stock. There is no doubt that citizens of the United States would long ago have developed a new language of their own (as Noah Webster advocated, in fact) had they not been so constantly in touch with the people and literature of Britain. Probably the possession of a common translation of the Bible has done more than any other one thing to preserve the linguistic unity of the Anglo-Saxon world. Even as it is, "American" has diverged in its vocabulary very considerably from English—there is a difference between the "King's English" and the "President's English."

It would take us too far afield to trace in detail the causes of the development of separate languages. But it is pertinent to our present topic to note that a contrary process is constantly at work. When men travel abroad in numbers, when the barriers which hitherto separate them break down, when intermarriage takes place, dialects begin to blend. When

[1] Lord Bryce, *Race Sentiment as a Factor in History* (1915), p. 34.

one people conquers another, the conqueror's language may either be adopted willingly by the vanquished, or it may be successfully imposed upon them for a time, and then out of the two a third speech may emerge which unites the elements of both. The prestige given to it by a written literature may lead to one dialect prevailing over others.

There are indeed two tendencies operating in the world to-day as they have operated in the past : the spirit of nationalism clings to the native speech, and if in the past this has been partially submerged, puts forth efforts to resuscitate it ; and, on the other hand, the feeling after a larger life of union is leading to the creation of new forms of speech.

III

The first Christian missionaries appear not to have had the linguistic difficulties which confront their modern successors. On the Day of Pentecost various devout men, from every nation under heaven (as the writer says hyperbolically), heard the apostles' preaching, every man in his own language wherein he was born. But if the gift of tongues meant the ability to speak many languages intelligibly, it was not continued. St Paul preached, so far as we are informed, only where Roman organization and Greek thought were established, and, except among his own Jewish countrymen, his language was Greek. In it he wrote his epistles—even the Epistle to the Romans. There is no evidence that evangelization of the Phrygian and Lycaonian peoples was ever attempted in their own

mother-tongues. "The Christians seem to have been all expected to read the Scriptures in Greek."[1] Perhaps this is one reason why the Christians of Asia Minor, except the Armenians, who possessed the Scriptures in their own tongue, were overwhelmed by Islam.[2]

Ancient Greece had almost as many dialects as there were towns, but Attic gained the mastery and formed the basis of the new Greek which became a world language, a universal medium of communication from the confines of India to the Tyrrhenian Sea. It naturally became the language of the Christian Church. In course of time Latin displaced it in the West, and became the language of religion and culture. The Anglo-Saxons originally possessed no books—their only "literature" consisted of songs and traditions handed down by word of mouth. The first school in England was established soon after the landing of Augustine in 596 and the conversion of Ethelbert, King of Kent.[3] For centuries, education remained in the hands of the clergy. Latin was the language of the Scriptures and of the services of the Church, and Latin was the chief subject in the schools. The first school-book of whose use we can find traces in England is a Latin grammar. King Alfred advocated and defended the use of the vernacular. He and others wrote books in it, and there was a time when the

[1] Sir William Ramsay, *St Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 132.

[2] In North Africa also, only the Copts and Abyssinians who had the Scriptures in their own languages preserved their faith.

[3] Some have claimed that the first school was opened in Dunwich, the famous Suffolk town now overwhelmed by the encroaching sea.

English possessed a literature that was unparalleled by any vernacular literature in Europe. He founded schools where boys and girls were taught to read and write their own tongue. But this excellent system did not prevail against the ecclesiastical mind. At the Norman Conquest the development of English literature was arrested, and for practically two hundred years Latin was the exclusive language of culture, and French the exclusive language of the ruling classes. All systematic training in the use of English ceased. Schoolboys construed their Latin exercises in French. When universities were founded, lectures were delivered in Latin, and the Fellows were bound to converse in the same tongue.

The time came when it seemed to men that the Church had sealed the Scriptures in Latin in order to keep them from the common folk. That was indeed the effect, but the Church did not originally adopt Latin in its services for any such purpose. In view of the disunity of the peoples and the multiplicity of languages, the use of a single language emphasized the unity of the Church. The use of Latin as the medium for education offered many obvious advantages: a student might wander from Oxford to Paris and then on to Bologna and Salerno, and everywhere would find famous teachers giving lectures in the one universal language of culture. Learned foreigners coming to England could address students direct and immediately. They could communicate with each other without difficulty. Indeed, these were advantages that we do not enjoy to-day in the absence of a substitute for Latin—if we wish to master a scientific

subject we must be able to read books in half a score of languages. Moreover, in Latin lay enshrined much of the wisdom of the past, while English possessed no literature to speak of in comparison. Latin came to be looked upon as one of the three sacred tongues, the mere hearing of which communicated sacramental grace, even if it were not understood. To translate from it into English was a desecration. Perhaps more than one ecclesiastic declared that, in comparison with Latin, English was a harsh tongue, "like the grunting of pigs or the roaring of lions." Such men quarrelled with any attempt to "dash out holy scrypture in euery lewde felowys tethe." By making Latin the medium of education, a few select souls were enabled to enter into their great heritage of knowledge. On the other hand, large numbers of men never read a book after their "education" was completed; and the great mass of the nation remained in ignorance.

It was a system that could not endure permanently in England. The rising force of national sentiment, which seeks expression through the mother-tongue, was opposed to it. That mother-tongue might be despised by the Latinists, but it was growing in power. It could enrich itself by taking in words and idioms from other tongues; it might even rid itself of some of its encumbrances by rubbing against the fashionable Latin and French; but those languages could not kill it. From the time that Geoffrey Chaucer wrote his treatise on the Astrolabe for "litel Lowis my sone," "under ful lighte rewles and naked wordes in English" —because "Latin ne canstow yit but smal, my lyte sone"; and the Lollard Purvey, Wyclif's disciple,

translated St Luke's Gospel " for the poor men of his nation which con little Latin or none, and be poor of wit and of worldly chattels and nevertheless rich of good will to please God "—the victory of English as the medium of educating England was, though still in the future, assured.

We have gone into this matter at such length because in our own days many devoted missionaries, and some eminent educationists, advocate that English should be the medium of instructing the backward peoples of the British Empire, just as Latin was used in mediæval Europe. For a considerable period now the education of India, save in elementary stages, has been conducted through English ; and our language has also been widely adopted in the schools of Africa. Indeed, English is being used beyond the Empire ; in China, for example, it is the medium for modern learning of all types, the coveted evidence of up-to-date scholarship, and missionaries consider it as part of their mission to teach it.[1]

The reasons for this procedure are similar to those urged by the mediævalist advocates of Latin. The use of English promotes unity. In other days it was the unity of the Church that was thought of ; now it is the unity of the State. But it is by no means certain that the language of a dominant race binds to that race the respect and affection of its subjects. British writers cite India as evidence to the contrary, and French writers point to Algeria. The use of a universal language is a means of unbabelling Babel, it is said, and a doorway into a higher culture. These

[1] *Christian Education in China* (1922), p. 344.

are strong reasons, but Babel may be to some degree unbabelled by the promotion of a lingua franca more akin to the Native languages than English is, and without the disadvantages that attach to English. Knowledge of our tongue may unquestionably be a way into a wider intellectual life ; I should be the last person to deny it, or to refuse this privilege to any person on earth. But this is no argument for conducting all education—or even all education above the primary stages—through the medium of English. To teach English as French and Latin are taught in British schools ; to teach all subjects in English and to expect the pupils to express themselves in English : these are two separate and distinct things and should not be confounded. If all pupils were taught to acquire a habit of silent reading of English books, this would serve the purpose of opening English literature to them. It is urged that this is not sufficient, since pupils require to speak English fluently for the purpose of earning more money ; since they need to speak it well they cannot begin to learn it at too early a stage ; so even at the expense of neglecting the home-speech, English must be taught from the beginning and to all pupils. On the other hand, it may be seriously questioned whether it is the missionary's business to produce English-speaking clerks and warehousemen for English merchants who decline to acquire the Native tongue ; and even were this admitted to be their duty, this is no argument for teaching English to all pupils in African and Indian schools : most of them will never have dealings with English people.

Just as the mediævalists despised the vernacular,

so do many educationists despise the vernaculars to-day. African languages, it is said, because of their poverty are incapable of being the medium of education beyond the most elementary stage. On the other hand, those who know these languages best are convinced that everything the Africans need to know at the present time can be conveyed through their mother-tongue, and that as the African grows in culture his language will keep pace with him, always providing an adequate medium for his thoughts. It has been said that Indian languages are also incapable of being used: they are so poor in scientific and philosophic terms; this is argued in face of Sir George Grierson's declaration about literary Hindustani, i.e. that the dialects from which it sprang are, and for five hundred years have been, capable of expressing with crystal clearness any idea which the mind of man can conceive. It has an enormous native vocabulary and a complete apparatus of abstract terms—a power of expression scarcely inferior to that of English.[1]

That these languages have no words for the chemical elements and parts of a motor-car is just as true as that English did not have them until they were made; we who have borrowed a quarter of the Latin vocabulary and a good part of most others need have no scruple about advising our Indian and African friends to borrow the new terms they need. That no text-books exist in these languages is an excellent argument for writing them when necessary; it is no argument for making English the medium of instruction. And if reading ability is cultivated, there is no valid reason why a

[1] *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. ix., part i.

class should not use an English text-book for study, while the teacher gives his lessons in the vernacular, and the students do their exercises in the same.

That all vernaculars can be improved by cultivation there is no doubt. We would devoutly hope that English education might have the effect of leading African and Indian writers to find themselves, as Latin and French stimulated Chaucer and other creators of English literature. There is indeed, as Mr Mayhew and other writers have attested, some sign that this is happening in India.[1]

We may well rejoice if our English education has had this result. But there is a great deal to be said about the disadvantages of that system, both in India and in Africa. I set forth some of these in *The Golden Stool*, and subsequent study has only confirmed my conviction. Mr Mayhew writes of "the appalling weight of assimilating a foreign culture through a foreign tongue." He complains that our high schools and colleges have not taught the Indians "to enjoy their life, to enter with minds steeped in the culture of their home and caste into a joyful heritage"; that the study of the English language reduces lamentably the time and energy available for work calculated to affect the material condition of India; and that, after all, the cultural value of learning English in the way it is learnt is very slight, for "rarely does one meet among the educated official class any keen or intelligent reader of English literature."

The whole subject of bilingualism has been studied, with special reference to Bengal, by Mr Michael West,

[1] Arthur Mayhew, *The Education of India* (1926), pp. 86, 87.

Principal of the Teachers' Training College at Dacca. His book,[1] the fruit of careful and prolonged investigations, should be read by all educationists in Africa and elsewhere.

Mr West insists upon the prime importance of the birth-tongue. "It is not a language," he declares, "but the foundation-stone of personality. A man who forgets his mother-tongue forgets himself." From this point of view he criticizes a system of education which subordinates, or excludes, the home-speech. He gathers expert opinion from several countries, and summarizes as follows the effects of the use of a foreign medium in instruction :

1. Lack of responsiveness in the class.
2. Lack of interest.
3. Saturation and inability to assimilate.
4. Lack of ability to read and study effectively. Parrot learning.
5. Lack of originality.
6. Retardation of boys in their progress and premature elimination of boys from the schools.

"The foreign medium prevents a boy from thinking freely ; and in not a few cases it makes it impossible for him to think at all." [2]

We are not arguing that English should be excluded from the schools : the language of knowledge can, without these disadvantages, be acquired sufficiently

[1] Michael West, *Bilingualism, with Special Reference to Bengal*. Bureau of Education, India, Occasional Reports, No. 13 (1926).

[2] Readers may be referred to the report of the International conference at Le Zoute, *The Christian Mission in Africa*, pp. 68, 69, for a statement of the pros and cons.

to allow those who need it to read books. Our argument is that it is utterly futile to think of educating a people through the medium of a foreign tongue.

We are considering the problem raised by the multiplicity of languages, and we conclude this section by expressing our conviction that education in a foreign tongue is not a satisfactory method of unbabelling Babel.

IV

We saw in a preceding chapter what an extraordinary dialectal confusion exists in the Italy of to-day. Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the supreme poet, was confronted with the problem. "If," he said, "we would calculate the primary, secondary, and subordinate variations of the vulgar tongue of Italy, we should find that in this tiny corner of the world the varieties of speech not only come up to a thousand but even exceed that figure." [1] He examined dialect after dialect and rejected each one in turn as unfitted to become a literary medium. What then? Were the Italians never to have a language, but only local dialects? Dante declared that there was a common Italian "whose fragrance is in every town, but whose lair is in none"; that the illustrious, cardinal, courtly and curial vernacular language was that which belonged to all the towns of Italy, but did not appear to belong to any one of them. Amid all the welter of speech there were common elements; and it was

[1] Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (Temple Classics edition; translated; pp. 32, 33).

the function of writers like himself to sift them out, gather them together, and so bring to perfection that form of the language which belonged to the whole of Italy without being the exclusive possession of any part.

Dante set himself to perform this great service for his beloved Italy. In this illustrious language which he discovered he wrote the *Divine Comedy*, the greatest of all poems. He not only gave the world a masterpiece of art ; he gave his people a language where before they only had dialects. It has inevitably changed and developed since his day—men do not speak Dante any more than they speak Shakespeare—but in a very real sense Dante's language continues to be the Italian of modern speech and literature. His poetry is studied in the schools ; it is the standard of comparison ; and it is only a matter of time for this Italian to drive out the dialects and become the home-speech of all Italy.

What Dante did for Italian, missionaries are to-day trying to do for peoples in various parts of the world —to create a common language out of multifarious dialects.

We may take as an example the Ibo language of Nigeria.

Iboland sprawls across the map of Nigeria from the lower reaches of the Niger to the middle Cross River. The people, who number upwards of four millions, are divided into about thirty sub-tribes. The language is split up into an immense number of dialects ; sometimes there is a great variation in the same town, while often neighbouring villages of the same sub-tribe

can hardly understand one another.[1] We need not dwell on the obvious inconveniences offered to missionary work by this state of affairs. Unfortunately, as often happens, several missions commenced operations without previous agreement as to the language to be adopted. Each one began to prepare a literature in a separate dialect, and in course of time the whole Bible was translated into one dialect (Onitsha) and considerable portions of the New Testament into two others (Isuama and Bonny). Yet these were inadequate, for many sections of the tribe could not understand them. Other missions were coming into unoccupied areas, and it seemed that translations would go on multiplying in various dialects, with the effect of accentuating the disunion of the people. Then the happy thought was born of producing the Bible in an illustrious Ibo made up of the common elements of the language.

Archdeacon Dennis of the Church Missionary Society undertook the task, established himself at Ebu, in the centre of Iboland, and for eight arduous years laboured with colleagues and relays of assistants drawn from the remotest corners of the country. Sitting together for seven or eight hours a day they hammered out the translation sentence by sentence, not regarding any sentence as finished until they were satisfied that it would be intelligible in every part of the Ibo country. They also produced other books.

In eight years of incessant labour Archdeacon Dennis and his assistants produced a complete transla-

[1] P. Amaury Talbot, *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria* (1926), vol. iv. p. 82.

tion of the Bible. As might be expected, this "Union Ibo," as it is named, was, and still is, criticized severely. People said, "This is not our Ibo—it's somebody else's Ibo." But the missionary societies pledged themselves to give it a five years' test. Tens of thousands of "Readers" in Union Ibo passed into the hands of schoolboys and catechumens. Hymns set to lively airs were rendered into it and were sung in the schools and churches. "The beautiful and liquid phrasing of the Archdeacon's Bible, as majestic and chaste in its euphony and its haunting sweetness as our own English Authorized Bible, spoke the grand truths of God and Christ to countless waiting hearts." [1] The Union Ibo, which at first sight seemed so foreign to everybody, became more than a literary medium; it became a living speech. Pupils took it home with them from school. People coming from distant parts found that they could understand each other through this new tongue, new but yet somehow their very own. So a path is opened for enormous development. Given a common speech, capable through cultivation and absorption of vocabulary, of expressing their deepest thought, the Ibo people may advance very far. In days to come they will look back to Archdeacon Dennis as one of the greatest benefactors of their nation.[2]

This is one method of unbabelling Babel—surely a better method than the introduction of a foreign tongue that is alien to the genius of the people!

[1] F. W. Dodds, in *The Bible in the World*, vol. xx. p. 170.

[2] For fuller details, the reader may refer to Archdeacon Dennis's article in *The Bible in the World*, vol. viii. pp. 182, et seqq.; also Mr Dodds' article cited above.

V

Scholars have asserted that while Dante set himself to discover an illustrious Italian among the multifarious forms which were current in his day, in reality the dialect of Tuscany, which he professed to despise, was the basis of his language. If that is true we have here a well-known phenomenon: the victory of one dialect over others. Of this our own modern English provides an excellent example.

Colonized from the continent by Teutonic tribes speaking various dialects, it was inevitable that from the first England should exhibit considerable diversity of speech. The early invaders brought no written literature with them, only an extensive wealth of songs and oral traditions. English literature began in the north, where Irish missionaries from Iona wrote down the local dialect in (mostly) Roman letters. The literary glory of Northumbria perished amid the havoc wrought by the Danes. Meanwhile a second start had been made in the Wessex of King Alfred, but this Anglo-Saxon literature died away at the Norman Conquest. And when the English renaissance came it was the East Midland dialect that took the lead and developed into the language we use to-day. Had the Danes not invaded our land we might now be speaking and writing in the Scots dialect of Robert Burns; thus:

> O Tibbie, I hae seen the day
> Ye wadna been sae shy;
> For laik o' gear ye lightly me,
> But, trowth, I care na by.

Or if, after the Danes had prevailed, the Normans

had been defeated at Hastings, our literary language might have been that of William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet ; thus :

> Since I noo mwore do zee your feäce
> Up steärs or down below,
> I'll zit me in the lwonesome pleäce,
> Where flat-bough'd beech do grow. . . .
> Since you noo mwore be at my zide,
> In walks in zummer het,
> I'll goo alwone where mist do ride,
> Droo trees a-drippen wet.

In the days of Chaucer there were numberless dialects in England, all of them accounted vulgar by the Latin-speaking and French-speaking pedants. They varied considerably. The man of Kent, for example, said *Ich ssel zigge* ; in the south-west they said *Ich schal sigge* ; in the East Midlands, *I shal seyn* ; in the West Midlands *I shal saie* ; and in the North, *I sal sai*—all of them meaning, " I shall say." [1]

In the thirteenth century anyone who aspired to write English used his own dialect ; there was no one standard form. The East Midland dialect ultimately prevailed because, for one reason, it was spoken midway between the southern and northern dialects and therefore became regarded in the nature of a compromise ; it was also, more or less, the speech of London, the capital, and of Oxford and Cambridge, the centres of culture. Moreover, it was the dialect in which Chaucer wrote the best poetry of the age, and in which, about the same time, Wyclif's translation of the Bible appeared. These writers proved the English language's power of expression, and natur-

[1] *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. i. p. 405.

ally exerted enormous influence. The predominance of East Midland was confirmed by the fact that the printers adopted it. And so the rustic speech of the East Midland counties was fashioned and shaped, and became in the course of two centuries the language of Tyndale and Shakespeare—the greatest treasure that the Englishman possesses.

What happened in England has happened also in many other countries. In Germany, for example, very largely through the influence of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, the dialect of Saxony, in which he wrote, gained extensive popular currency, superseded the old Hochdeutsch and Plattdeutsch, which were then the prevalent German dialects, and became the basis of the literary language of modern Germany.

In other countries, translations of the Bible have led to similar results. Missionaries select, whether accidentally or of set purpose after research and trial, one particular dialect, reduce it to writing, enlarge its vocabulary by bringing in words from other dialects or from other tongues, and it becomes in course of time the standard language of the country. It is another method of unbabelling Babel.

VI

When sailors and traders of various nations jostled against each other in the Levant, a jargon was born that was named the lingua franca, "the Frankish tongue." The word has been extended to embrace all mixed languages originating in the encounter of peoples of various race and speech. There are, of course, no

unmixed languages; every nation that comes into contact with another borrows from it words and idioms. The difference between English and Hindustani in this respect is one of degree only—and English might well be called a lingua franca. It is a difficult word to define precisely; what it means in general use will be seen most clearly from a study of one or two examples.

Hindustani is the great lingua franca of India, spoken by millions of people. It was originally the home-speech of the people in and around Delhi who formed the majority of frequenters of the bazaar, and hence it became the bazaar language. Then it became the lingua franca of the Mogul camp and was carried to every part of India. One of its several varieties is Urdu—*Urdu zaban*, the language of the camp—and this is now the standard form of speech used by Muhammadan Indians.

Swahili, the extensive lingua franca of East Africa, arose through the contact of Arab traders—many of them slave-traders—with the Africans living on the coast and in the far interior. The grammar is Bantu; a large portion of the vocabulary is Arabic. Portuguese, French, and English words have also been incorporated, e.g. *kasha* (caxa) =large box; *bweta* (boite) =box; *mutuka* (motor-car).

Some people claim that within a short time no less than fifteen million people will be using Swahili; and a large proportion of these already use it as their mother-tongue. The Government of Tanganyika Territory, and the majority of the missionaries in that country, are in favour of adopting it as the universal

language for education and literature. They are now endeavouring to standardize it. Some literature already exists—the whole Bible has been translated into both the Zanzibar and Mombasa dialects—and this is being enlarged. It may very well be that in years to come Swahili will be the language of East Africa—from the Zambezi to the Nile, and inland from the coast to the interior of the Belgian Congo.

We turn now to a particularly interesting African lingua franca ; one formed not, like Swahili, through the impact of a foreign tongue upon the Bantu speech, but through the jostling of several Bantu languages upon each other. We have referred already to the multitudinous forms of speech employed in the Congo region. When white men began to penetrate in numbers to the Middle Congo, their workmen were drawn from several tribes living between Stanley Pool and Upoto. These men had previously lived in isolation, and their languages were mutually unintelligible. Brought together on steamer and station, they soon found the common base of their several languages, and used it as the medium of their intercourse. The resultant tongue came to be known as Bangala. It is not a mere grammarless lingo like pidgin-English, for it arose not from the endeavour of the black man to speak a language belonging to a totally different family from his own, but from the endeavour of a number of people of one race, speaking languages of a single family, to reach a common medium. Missionaries, traders, and Government officials saw the advantage offered by this lingua franca Much as some of them, accustomed to use

the rich home-speech of the tribes, might scorn Bangala as a bastard jargon, neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring, they could not but see that its use was extending. They found that people were growing up who, in spite of the schools, were losing grip of their expressive mother-tongues ; that thousands of children were already born to the soldiers of the State to whom Bangala was the mother-tongue. They wisely decided to direct and control the movement, shaping Bangala gradually into a language which would serve alike for State purposes and education, and as an effective medium of interchange of thought and idea between the numerous native tribes. The Rev. W. H. Stapleton, a Baptist scholar, systematized it by preparing a grammar,[1] and subsequently several books were written in it. The New Testament has now been translated, and this will unquestionably go a long way towards standardizing Bangala as the literary language of the Upper Congo.

VII

In the course of this long chapter the very real problem of language has been brought before us. Convinced as they may be of the inestimable value of the mother-tongue, missionaries and educationists yet find themselves on the horns of a dilemma when that mother-tongue is the dialect (or language) of a small population : its cultivation may be detrimental

[1] W. H. Stapleton, *Suggestions for a Grammar of "Bangala,"* 2nd edition, revised and enlarged, by Frank Lougland (1914). We have taken our account of Bangala chiefly from the Introduction to this book.

to the wider interests of the people.[1] The displacement of the home-speech by an altogether alien speech is no solution of the problem. The ideal method is for instruction to be given, and for a literature to be created, in the language to which people are born and bred—the home-speech ; this does not, of course, preclude the learning of a foreign tongue. Where the home-speech is a dialect, or a minor language, one of several courses is open to the teachers of the people. They may promote the use of one dialect as the standard speech ; they may adopt a standard speech made up of common elements in the dialects ; or they may use for educational and literary purposes a lingua franca, composed of some at least of the elements of the home-speech. When any one of these expedients is followed, there must be a transition period until the standard speech replaces the earlier mother-tongue in the homes of the people. That period may be a long one. Many emigrants to America, surrounded by American culture, with English words ever in their ears and the things to which the words refer their actual environment, yet remain aliens to the second and third generation, expressing their thoughts and feelings in their mother-tongue—not in English. Much longer may the period be when the circumambient atmosphere is soaked with the old speech. For a second tongue to replace

[1] " The dilemma of the educator of a backward people is sufficiently clear. If he retains the national language and leaves out the second language, the learners are cut off from all intellectual progress ; if he retains the second language and attempts to leave out the national, their education is made barren in respect of emotion, character, and culture of the ' feelings.' "—Michael West, *op. cit.* p. 52.

the first it is not sufficient to teach it in schools and use it in church. Not till the mothers speak it to their infants—not till the old grandmothers cast into its mould the traditional folk-tales which they narrate to the children at night—will it become the home-speech. Whence it follows that in Iboland and East Africa, and elsewhere, if the new tongue is to prevail it is above all necessary that the girls should be taught to make it their own.

What is to be done in this transition period ? That is an urgent and practical question. It is obvious that the missionary cannot postpone his teaching and preaching until the new tongue is firmly established. He may write his books and teach the children in the lingua franca, but he cannot afford to neglect the older people who know it not, nor the women who are naturally more conservative than the young men who travel abroad and pick up the lingua franca. There is no escape from using the two languages concurrently. The children will be bilingual—speaking the home-speech to their parents and other older people, but using the second language to their fellows and other educated folk. This is indeed what we find in the rural areas of England to-day. The time will come in the African and other regions which we have in mind, when, as in many thousands of English homes, the literary speech of the books and schools will have become (more or less) the home-speech. Until then the missionary is fully justified in using the dialect or older language in dealing with people who know no other. Indeed, he cannot do otherwise. He is in the right to produce certain books for the less educated,

even while it is impossible to provide for an extensive literature.

This is indeed what missionaries are doing. And it is the policy of the Bible Society to print, whenever necessary, not only the New Testament and the whole Bible for the use of large tribes, numbering millions, but also Gospels and other books of Scripture for the use of peoples whose dialect or language is in use by only a few thousands. It may be that these minor dialects and languages will perish in course of time, but in the meanwhile the people must be fed.

CHAPTER V

MASTERING A LANGUAGE

I

To learn Chinese, said Dr William Milne, Robert Morrison's colleague, is " a work for men with bodies of brass, lungs of steel, heads of oak, hands of spring-steel, hearts of apostles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah."

This may seem extravagant, but in the circumstances it was a natural extravagance, for Milne did not possess the helps that now exist for learning Chinese. It is certainly a very difficult language to master. Student interpreters attached to the British Legation—picked men, who have already proved their mettle at the university and in competitive examinations—are, on first appointment to China, allowed two years at Peking for the study of the language, to the exclusion of all other duties. " Every facility is afforded, every inducement held out, and some of them work fourteen hours a day. But at the end of the two years they would be the first to admit to having merely touched the fringe of the embroidered robes of La Belle Dame, to being still on this side of the gulf." [1]

After the student has hacked his way through the jungle of the Tones and the Colloquial, he comes up against the basalt cliffs of the written language. In

[1] A. M., " La belle Dame sans Merci " (i.e. Chinese), in *Blackwood's Magazine*, May 1924.

the famous dictionary compiled under the directions of the learned Emperor K'ang Hsi (A.D. 1662–1723) there are said to be forty thousand characters. A Chinese character may be built up of no less than twenty-nine strokes—that is to say, twenty-eight times in writing it the brush has to be lifted from the paper. Fortunately it is not necessary for the ordinary student to learn all these characters. A Chinese newspaper can be published on a fount of about six thousand; a scholar can rub along with four thousand; a merchant finds that from two to three thousand enable him to read most newspapers and business documents. Each conventional symbol has to be committed to memory—its appearance, its meaning, its pronunciation. An adult foreigner in the course of a year's study masters, it is said, without difficulty from two to three thousand characters. But this kind of writing presents such an obstacle that we cannot wonder if ninety per cent of Chinese are illiterate.

Chinese has no formal parts of speech—no grammar, in our sense of the term. The same word may correspond to a noun, a verb, an adjective; the difference may be marked only by the pitch of voice. The word-sequence in a sentence is generally the one that is natural to the Englishman. But the astounding variety in the meaning of individual words is a formidable difficulty to him. To think that men have succeeded in translating the Chinese classics into English—and the Bible into Chinese!

Now Chinese is one of the great languages of the world. It is probably spoken by larger numbers of people than any other. For four thousand years it

has been a literary language. Centuries before Christ Chinese literature was mature—comprised works of philosophy and of historical research. If we turn to forms of speech destitute of literature until very recent times, we shall find that many of them are structurally far more complex than Chinese and almost, if not quite, equally difficult to learn—apart from the written characters.

Let us take Eskimo, the speech of people living under very primitive conditions in the Frozen North. Mr Stefansson writes about it as follows :

To put it roughly, there is no doubt that for an Englishman it would be much easier to acquire Russian, Swedish, French, and Greek than to acquire Eskimo alone. To take the only actual case, the circumstances of which are fully known to me, which is of course my own, it may be said that I had a book knowledge of the Eskimo before going to the North, and I have lived for five years in houses where nothing but Eskimo was spoken. I listened to every word with all my ears, for to acquire the language has been both my chief work and my chief pastime, and yet it was only the last of the five winters that my command of the language had become such that I could follow without effort the ordinary conversations going on in the house.

Mr Stefansson illustrates the difficulties of Eskimo by sketching the manner in which a verb can be built up and its meaning modified by the addition of syliables to its root. " No man," he says, " has ever worked out the number of possible different ways in which a single Eskimo verb may be used, but it is

undoubtedly up in the tens of thousands, if not in the hundreds of thousands." [1]

And in this difficult language also the Bible has been translated !

II

We have given a glimpse into the difficulties presented by two languages of very different structure, Chinese and Eskimo. But these are not the only difficult languages. No language is easy. To learn a few handy phrases, sufficient to enable one to ask one's way about, is quite a simple business, but to get to the point where you can do everything in the foreign tongue that you can do in your own, and do it with equal facility, entails hard work, steady application, years of unremitting practice.

The mistakes that aliens make in speaking and writing English provide endless diversion. Who has not heard of the distinguished visitor who, wishing to pay his hostess a compliment, said, " Madame, what a beautiful hide you possess " ?

Travellers in Europe and other countries often find amusement in the warnings and announcements placarded for their benefit. A visitor to Japan reports having seen the following notices displayed in shop-windows : A forwarding agent : " Leave your luggage with us and we will send it in every direction." A milliner : " Clothing of woman tailor : Ladies furnished in the upper storey." A dressmaker : " Respectable ladies have fits upstairs."

[1] Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *My Life with the Eskimo*, p. 354.

An African youth wrote thus to the Principal of the Tiger Kloof Training Institution :

Dear Mr Haile,

My Lord,—I find I will be unable to be at the aperture of the Inst. on the 13 Feb. On returning from my holidays I found that my brother had fallen asleep. The incident of the accident was a lion.

I have quoted these specimens of English as spoken or written, not for the purpose of ridiculing the foreigner, but for the purpose of reminding myself and my readers that we English make equal havoc with other languages which we learn. The errors we perpetrate are just as much a standard joke abroad as the foreigner's errors are a standard joke among ourselves. Who that has tried to speak other tongues cannot recall, with a shiver and a blush, his atrocious blunders ? Such blunders may be found even in the books which we write for our converts in the mission field—even in translations of the Scriptures.

The Rev. W. Chapman was once telling people in Northern Rhodesia about the wonderful things to be found in his country. He certainly succeeded in astonishing them !

A railway train was the most wonderful thing of all. I then described as well as I could a locomotive, its strength, its wonderful swiftness, and declared to them that an *imbongolo* could leave the Zambezi at sunrise and reach Nanzela by dinner-time, bringing with it more loads than all Sezungo's people could carry ! Some of them had travelled through that country, and knew it was a good ten days' journey. They

were greatly impressed by my oratory, and I finished by saying, "But none of you boys have ever seen an *imbongolo*." To my great astonishment one fellow replied, "Yes, I have; the missionary at Nkala has two." Then it suddenly dawned upon me that instead of using the word for "train" I had got the word for "donkey," and had actually been telling those people that a donkey in England could travel 150 miles in half a day, and draw a train load of wagons behind it. I had to go over the story again, but there was little pleasure in telling it the second time.[1]

Here is another example, this time from the Southern Seas :

Other things being equal, nothing hampers a missionary more than imperfect idioms and inaccurate pronunciations. The nearer he approaches to the language of the natives, the deeper and more persuasive will be the spiritual influence he exerts. A misplaced vowel often makes an entirely different meaning. A personal experience at Roviana will illustrate what I mean. I had been preaching about there being two classes of men in the world : good men and bad men. I intended to convey that it mattered not whether we were white men or black men, we were all either good or bad in the sight of God. After the service was over, however, I was told that I had preached about stomachs ! I had been careless in my pronunciation, and had used *tia*, which means stomach, instead of the word *tie*, which means man. My address amounted to a twenty minutes' sermon on *stomachs* ![2]

[1] William Chapman, *A Pathfinder in South Central Africa* (1910), p. 156.

[2] R. C. Nicholson, *The Son of a Savage*, p. 74.

Fortunately, our people have a sense of humour !

Our mistakes become more serious when they are committed to writing. It is said that in the first effort to translate a well-known hymn, the first line really meant, " Lord, kick us out gently, gently." When a Tamil hymn book used in South India was being revised it was discovered that the Christians had for many years been singing in a favourite wedding hymn : " Save us, in mercy, from married happiness " !

In an early version of the Psalter made for the natives of Florida, an island in the Solomons group, the sentence " the wild asses quench their thirst " was rendered by words which were afterwards discovered to mean " the cannibal pigs drink water to stop hiccoughs."

III

We all make mistakes when we attempt to speak and write foreign languages. But we ought not to allow that fact to deter us from trying to learn them—he who never made a mistake never made anything. It is the missionary's supreme duty so to learn the language of his people as to speak it correctly, automatically, as the people speak it. The casual tourist may be satisfied if he can ask a few questions, or read them from the phrase books prepared for his special use. But a nodding acquaintance is not sufficient for the missionary. He must not be content with speaking as most of us speak French—after this fashion : " Zher swee commonsong der parley Frongsay tray biang, nayce par ? "—or as some Frenchmen speak

English : " Ai mek mi veri ouelle eunderstand hwenne ai gau inne Ennegleunde." It is not enough to be able to read a Scripture lesson, or announce hymns, or even deliver a carefully prepared and written sermon to a congregation that have accustomed themselves to the eccentricities of the foreigner's unidiomatic and mispronounced speech. It is not enough to have a passive knowledge, that is, to be able to understand and to read ; he must acquire an active knowledge, that is to say, be able to speak and write with a fluency and accuracy that have become almost instinctive. So long as he has to stop and think, groping in his mind for an equivalent of an English word that is present in his consciousness, and translating mentally from one tongue to another, so long he is far from his goal. He must, to use Jespersen's metaphor, be steeped in the language, must be ducked down in it, and get to feel as if he were in his own element, so that he may at last disport himself in it as an able swimmer.[1] If we wish to profess ourselves French scholars, it is not enough to be able to read and enjoy the highly artistic pages of Anatole France ; we must be able to meet a Parisian cocher on his own ground, slang for slang, curse for curse. Yes, we must not neglect the slang and swear-words, if only to know what to avoid in respectable society.

This is to hold up a high ideal. And it is precisely a high ideal that missionaries need to keep before them in this matter. A very high attainment is necessary for all, and especially for the man or woman who aspires to be a translator.

[1] Otto Jespersen, *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1904), p. 48.

IV

Let us return to the pioneer missionary at the point where we left him at the close of our first chapter. He has painfully acquired one or two phrases and a few words. How is he to proceed in order to master the strange language? He is in a very different case from his brethren in countries like India, China, and Japan. Well-equipped language schools have been established there. The young missionary has the inestimable advantage of expert teachers, qualified to instruct him according to approved methods, and text-books written on scientific principles. The pioneer has no such privileges—no teacher, no books, no established orthography; perhaps he has never before learnt a spoken language and has had no training in phonetics. In these days, a candidate for a field where the language is unknown, or where it is not to be learnt in any school, may, and should, receive the essential instruction in phonetics, and perhaps in a cognate language, at the London School of Oriental Studies or elsewhere, as part of his preparation. There is no excuse to-day for any missionary society's sending out men and women unprepared in this respect. But the pioneers of whom we are thinking at present had to do their work before these facilities were available. How did they proceed? What were the difficulties they had to overcome?

When we think of the manner in which we were taught Latin and French at school thirty or forty years ago, we are amazed at the futility of it. The chief object of my teacher in French (he was an

Englishman who had never been out of England) seems to have been to cram sufficient grammar into my head to get me through the examination. Incredible as it may appear, we were never taught to pronounce French—never attempted to converse in it. We learnt verbs and rules of grammar, and we translated from French into English, but the only direction we received as to pronunciation was, " Speak as it is written "—curiously inept advice when applied to French, for if there is one language more than another which cannot be spoken as it is written, it is French. We learnt Latin in the same way, beginning straight off with *mensa*, *mensae*, *mensam*, and I for one never for years really appreciated the fact that Latin was once the everyday home-speech of people.

Nowadays, of course, these stupid old methods have been swept into oblivion. This generation is taught modern languages, and even Latin, by the Direct Method. Translation is taboo—too much so, perhaps, in some schools, for translation has its uses. Pupils are warned never to open a dictionary. Grammatical rules are at a discount. The time to learn syntax, you are told, is when you have learnt the language. You acquire German, for example, entirely through the medium of German ; from first to last no word of the mother-tongue is introduced into the lessons. Words are associated, so far as possible, with the objects and acts to which they refer. The pupil learns by speaking. He grows into the habit of using the foreign speech without thinking in his own. He is counselled to make his own grammar as he goes along, and the only direct help he gets is perhaps a list of the verb-forms.

The aim of this reform in language study is to substitute a natural for an artificial method. It was by a natural method that we learnt our mother-tongue. Whether it is because the muscles of their vocal organs are more supple, or because their ear is more sensitive than ours, or because they have not the associations and habits that we have, or because they have nothing else to do but to learn, and have plenty of time, or because they have unlimited opportunities of learning—whatever may be the reason, it is an undoubted fact that children learn a language much better than an adult can learn it.[1] If only we could learn as they learn! Unfortunately, we are no longer children. Yet we may learn many lessons from the methods of childhood, and the modern Direct Methods prove so successful because they are a real attempt to recapture these methods.

The point I wish to make is that long before these reforms were introduced in Europe the pioneer missionary had adopted—indeed was compelled to adopt —the Direct Method. But with a difference. European pupils are taught by skilled teachers, who have excellent manuals for their guidance. The pioneer has no teacher. He may find a difficulty in persuading any Native to help him; his assistant may soon weary of the unwonted task; may deliberately lead him astray, or may think it impolite to correct

[1] The question here touched on has been dealt with in some fullness by Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development, and Origin* (1922), pp. 140 *seqq.* He finds the real answer partly in the child himself and partly in the behaviour towards him of the people around him.

his errors. Sentences are not conveniently arranged for him in advance. He may acquire many words by pointing and by acting; he can only correct his vocabulary and learn other words by listening to the conversation that goes on around him, and by noting in his memory or on paper the phrases which the people use and by comparing phrase with phrase, word with word. To-day he may catch and record the singular form of a noun, or the past tense of a verb; and it may be weeks or months before he hears the plural of the noun or the future tense of the verb. Learners of a European language always have a dictionary to fall back upon, when they cannot otherwise understand a word, but the pioneer has no such resource. His task is therefore very much more difficult, but his method is much the same as that of the adherents of the Direct Method in our modern schools.

The first difficulty confronting the linguistic pioneer is offered by the sounds of the new language. He hears all around him an incomprehensible torrent of speech poured out at the rate of fifteen sounds per second.[1] He does not hear isolated words as recorded in a dictionary—he hears sentences made up of speech-sounds. All the sounds which are the delight and stock-in-trade of the phonetician stream about him

[1] Thomas F. Cummings, *How to Learn a Language* (1916), p. 11: "At a comparatively slow rate of utterance, we are compelled to receive over fifteen vowel and consonant sounds per second, and in rapid utterance it may be thrice as many. In the production of each of these, two or three movements of the vocal organs are involved, so that we find the vocal organs are compelled to make from thirty to one hundred and fifty movements per second."

in apparently inextricable confusion, and convey no sense whatsoever to his mind. He may feel, as Herodotus said of the speech of the Trogolodytes, that it is " like the squeaking of bats."

The pioneer quickly appreciates the truth which has sometimes been overlooked in the schools: that language is uttered sound; it is spoken; its appeal is first to the ear. He has to learn to reproduce these sounds with fidelity; to discover their meaning; to represent them in symbols in such a way that other people may be able to reproduce the sounds again with accuracy. To master the sounds he must first of all listen, listen, listen, go on listening. Even though he cannot understand a word, he must bathe his ears in the sounds, allow his mind to become familiar with them. It is not given to everybody to have " a quick ear," but ears can be trained. However cleverly one may have learnt a classical language by purely literary methods, he will find it of little avail in learning a new tongue by ear. It is often found that comparatively uneducated people learn the language more quickly, and more accurately, than others, because they can catch and imitate sounds more readily. This is how our children acquire speech. The child reproduces all he hears—vowels, consonants, stress, intonation—so far as lies in his power, and he goes on trying until he is perfect.

An ideal imitator is an ideal language-learner, for correct auditive perception and correct oral production are the natural bases of all true language-study. Those who have lost their early faculties of oral reproduction must be prepared to reacquire them,

else will their progress be as that of the snail, or at best as that of a crab or a waltzing mouse.[1]

Many of the sounds may be identical with those in our mother-tongue; some may be totally different from anything we have heard; and others may differ by only a minute shade. It is these last that cause most difficulty. The pioneer linguist needs to be careful not to confound the sounds he hears with those of his own language.

The diversity in sound may be reflected in the diversity of meaning of the words in which they occur. In the Mombasa form of Swahili, spoken in East Africa, for example, there are a palatal *t* (t), a dental *t* (*t*), and both may be aspirated (t', *t*'). These must on no account be confused. Kitoto means "a small child," ki*t*o*t*o, "a crooked path"; n*t*'i is "earth," nt'i, "ear-rings," n*t*i, a "chart"; *t*'ama means "rubbish"; *t*ama, "end"; tama, "cheek."[2]

This is but one among numerous examples of the variation of consonants. Vowels also differ very considerably from language to language. This is one of the first lessons we learn in French. The difference between French vowels and English vowels makes one of the difficulties in learning to speak French correctly. We are apt to pronounce *pas* like "paw," *fini* like "finny," *père* like "pear." In other languages great care has to be exercised not to mistake a long *o* (ō) for a short one, or a long *u* for a short *u*. The kind of

[1] Harold E. Palmer, *The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages* (1917), p. 54.

[2] Mrs F. Burt, *Swahili Grammar and Vocabulary* (2nd edition, 1926), pp. 149, 150.

error that may be made will be seen from the following pairs of words in Japanese. *Oi* means "nephew," *ōi*, "many"; *tori*, "bird," *tōri*, "thoroughfare"; *ho-hei*, "infantry," *hō-hei*, "artillery"; *yuki*, "snow," *yūki*, "courage."[1]

In some languages the tones provide a serious stumbling-block to the foreigner. We know that in English we do not utter all the words of a sentence, nor all the syllables of a word, at the same musical level or pitch. That is to say, we employ intonation in our speech. Intonation often modifies the meaning of a word or of a sentence. "No," for example, may mean "of course not," "certainly not," "is it really so?" "it may be so, but . . .," according to the tone in which it is uttered. And "yes" may mean "of course it is so," "is it really so?" "that may be so." In some languages intonation plays a much more important part than it does with us—it may completely change the meaning of numerous words. In every Chinese word there is inherent a melody of this kind, and words otherwise phonetically identical can be distinguished only by the tone in which they are uttered.

The errors into which Europeans fall over the tones provide many an amusing story. Lady Hosie, for example, in the very charming narrative of her experiences as a guest in Chinese homes, tells of the mistakes she made.

Aunt Kung laughed till she ached one evening, when I confessed how disgracefully I had that morning

[1] Rudolf Lange and C. Noss, *A Text-Book of Colloquial Japanese* (1903), p. xx.

misunderstood her. She had put her head suddenly into my room and asked me if I liked *kwei*. There was no context ; the question had been shot at me out of the blue. The only meaning I could attach to the word at the moment was " devils." I had heard her talking to someone outside, so thought perhaps I was being vilified as a person who liked devils and she was defending me. I had hastily answered, " No, not at all, thank you," as being safe in any case. Her face had fallen as she went away, and I put my head out of the door, to discover that the interlocutor was Old Three-Four. I went back, looked up my dictionary for the meanings of *kwei*, and saw one meaning was " mushrooms "—the same word in Chinese, with a different twirl to the voice. Aunt Kung's intention had simply been to vary the day's menu !

It is encouraging to know that Chinese sometimes fall into the traps which their language provides for the foreigner. The Rev. Lloyd R. Rist tells, in *China's Millions*, of a Chinese traveller who arrived at an inn in Szechwan and told the inn-keeper to buy him a *chukan*, meaning a brush.

The inn-keeper, not recognizing the difference of tone, thought the traveller wanted a pig's liver. So he took two thousand *cash* from his guest and went to the butcher's. The pig's liver came to eighteen hundred cash, and the butcher, not having change, put in a pig's ear to make up the amount. The inn-keeper put the ear under his clothing, intending to keep it for himself. He returned to the inn and told the traveller the pig's liver came to two thousand *cash*. The traveller, seeing he had been misunderstood, exclaimed, " Where are your ears ? " The inn-keeper,

again not hearing correctly, thought he was caught, and at once put his hand under his clothing and pulled out the pig's ear.

A legend is current in China of an English lady who asked in a grocer's shop for "a pound of pickled policeman," when she meant to say (only she got the tones wrong), "a pound of mixed biscuits."

Not only in China, but also in Tibet, Burma, Siam, and Cochin-China, the use of tones prevails to a greater or less extent. Sir George Grierson says that in one language *ba ba ba ba*, if properly intoned, would mean "three ladies gave a box on the ear to a favourite of the prince." In the Shan language of Burma, the following sentences can be formed of words only to be distinguished by tone :

Ma ma ma ma ma : Help the horse, a mad dog comes.

Hkan hkan hkan hkan hkan hkan : Quickly calculate the weight, and tell the price.

Na na na na : The face of the younger brother is exceedingly stupid.

Hkai hkai hkai hkai : I wish to sell mottled eggs.

Kai kai kai kai kai : A fowl has just gone by, busily scratching mud.

Pa pa pa pa pa pa : My aunt went towards the jungle, with fish slung on her shoulder.[1]

The Sudanese languages of West Africa are also marked by the employment of tones to distinguish

[1] Sir G. A. Grierson, "Tell-Tale Tones," in *The Bible in the World* vol. ix. pp. 263, 264.

words. They are largely monosyllabic ; numbers of words look like the syllables in a child's Primer—*ba*, *be*, *bi*, *bo*, *bu*, etc. Every possible combination of a consonant followed by a vowel is a word in the Ewe tongue. The number of such combinations is limited and insufficient to express all the ideas of the people. They eke them out by the simple process of pronouncing the syllables with a different pitch of the voice. Thus *da* (with a low tone) means " throw " ; *da* (with a high tone), " crawl." In recent years it has been discovered that many of the Bantu languages of Africa are also tonal.

The Chuana language of South Africa had been studied for a century, and no grammar or dictionary had ever noted the existence of tones, when Mr Daniel Jones, with the assistance of Mr S. T. Plaatje, discovered them in 1915. He found that every syllable in the language has a special pitch relatively to the other syllables, and that if a syllable is said on a wrong pitch, it may change the word into an entirely different word, or may give the word a wrong grammatical form. The tones play an important part in the declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs. If you say *nama* with a low pitch, it means " meat " ; if the pitch rises, it means " to sit with outstretched legs " or " to spend more time over something " ; if the pitch falls considerably, *nama* is the name of the Namaqua country.[1]

Now this book is not a treatise on phonetics, and we have said sufficient to illustrate the difficulties which

[1] Daniel Jones and S. T. Plaatje, *A Sechuana Reader* (1916), pp. xxv, 40.

are encountered in this respect by missionaries and others who learn strange languages. If we wish to speak a foreign tongue correctly, four things must be acquired : accuracy in grammar, correct enunciation of the sounds, accent, and rhythm. Accent and rhythm are perhaps the most important of all. Sometimes we listen to a lecture delivered by a learned French or German professor, who is able to read English silently but has never learnt to speak it. He dislikes being interpreted and so, greatly daring, he ventures to read his address. The grammar may be flawless. His enunciation of certain consonants may be faulty—he says *t* or *d* for *th*, for example—but this does not greatly affect our understanding of him. What obscures his message is the accent and the rhythm, for he reads the English sentences as if they were French or German. It is a mistake that we are all liable to make. That is why when a missionary speaks to people who have not grown accustomed to his faults, they may say to him : " We do not understand the white man's speech," although he thinks he is speaking their language, not his own.

What I have written in this chapter illustrates not only the difficulties which the missionary encounters ; it should, as it is meant to do, enforce the necessity of a preliminary study of phonetics. This is not a luxury which young missionaries can afford to do without : it is an absolutely essential part of their training, to whatsoever field they may be destined. I write feelingly on the question, because I know how much my own work was spoilt through ignorance of phonetics. A thorough grounding in the science and art of phonetics

will not only enable a man or woman to master a language more rapidly—and therefore is a saving of time—but it will also enable him to learn to speak the language correctly, as it should be spoken by those whose object is to influence, through its agency, the people to whom they go.

V

The pioneer linguist has not only to master the phonology of the language and the meaning of the words, but also to write down the language. In the case of many forms of speech his path is already settled for him. The people already possess an alphabet, or system of writing, of their own, and this he will naturally employ in the books which he prepares. The Bible Society uses no fewer than sixty alphabets in printing versions of Scripture. These include the curious Batta characters, employed by people who live in the central highlands of Sumatra, and who wrote upon bamboo staves and the bark of trees, by means of a twig, and ink made of soot. They include also the script of Cambodia, which was written with a pointed piece of wood on narrow palm leaves, the letters being afterwards damped and rubbed until they showed up black. Some of the books are composed in type like our own, but others are produced by photography, the manuscript first being written fairly by a Native scribe.

In this chapter we have alluded to the great difficulty presented by the Chinese language. It is characteristic of Chinese that each separate word is represented

by a distinct character. Even a pocket-dictionary contains over ten thousand of these "ideographs." An unknown Chinese character cannot even be pronounced, nor can any inkling of its meaning be obtained. One wonders why a highly intelligent people have acquiesced for many centuries in the use of such a cumbrous system. The effect on the literacy of the people is obvious; if only ten per cent of the Chinese are able to read, it is due largely to the difficulty presented by the script. Somebody has said that ideographic writing must have been introduced into China by the devil, on purpose to keep out the Gospel from the language of one quarter of the human race. Others have said that so difficult a language will have to be scrapped altogether before the Chinese can reap the benefits of universal education. This, however, is inconceivable, and would rob the Chinese, and the world, of a precious possession.

The question then arises, How can the Chinese retain their ancient and difficult system of writing, and yet secure that every individual in China shall be able to read and write?

About thirty years ago, in the days of the Empress Dowager, a great Chinese scholar and reformer, Wang Chao by name, who held the highest obtainable literary degree, invented a phonetic system of symbols. Like many other reforms this was branded as revolutionary and was suppressed, while its author was sent into banishment and died in exile. In more recent years this system has been revived and modified by two missionaries of the London Missionary Society, Dr Ernest Peill and Dr Sydney Peill. By means of

seventy simple symbols any word in the Chinese language can be expressed in print or writing. " It has been abundantly proved that illiterate men and women can learn it in a fortnight or less, and can read it with the greatest ease and fluency, with perfect rhythm and emphasis." The Bible Society has published the New Testament in this phonetic script.

Another system, called the Chu Yin, was introduced some years ago by the Chinese Government and approved in 1918, especially for the use of students and with the object of unifying pronunciation in all the provinces of China, not for the purpose of enabling the illiterate to read. It employs only thirty-nine symbols, but is said to be less easily acquired by the uneducated than the Wang Chao system. The New Testament has also been produced in this form.

Where no indigenous script existed—which means the greater part of the world—missionaries have had to choose between two courses. They might invent a brand-new alphabet, or borrow one.

In 1840 James Evans, a Methodist missionary, was sent to evangelize the Cree Indians who roamed about in the regions of Hudson Bay—the inhospitable north of Canada. It was a difficult task because of the nomadic habits of these people. Mr Evans saw that the thing to do was to find some way by which they could learn to read quickly, and to provide them with the Scriptures, so that while they were wandering about they could read the Gospel for themselves. The words of the Cree language are mostly of inordinate length—one word containing a whole sentence. *Oocheookascheyowunewatikunewetawakoopun*, for ex-

ample, means "dry fish had been put up in a spruce-bark basket." How were the people to learn to read such words easily? Mr Evans invented a system of syllabic writing—each syllable being represented by a simple character. Thus ∨=pā; ∧=pē; >=pō; <=pä; ⌝=mā; ⌜=mē; ⌟=mō; ⌞=mä. Various appendages were added to represent vowels and consonants standing alone. As soon as the Indians mastered this simple alphabet they could begin to read. Mr Evans translated for them one of the Gospels. As he possessed no printing-press, he made one. He had no type, so he whittled out patterns and then, from moulds of his own making, he cast his type out of the lead linings of the tea-chests he begged from traders. He had no ink, so he manufactured some out of soot and fish-oil. He had no paper, so he made a substitute out of the bark of the birch tree. Thus he provided the first Gospel for his flock—alphabet, translation, press, ink, and paper, all his own handiwork. The Bible Society eventually came to the aid of the Cree Indians and supplied them with the Bible on good paper. But the syllabic alphabet remains still in use, and has been adopted for other Canadian tribes of Indians, as well as for the Eskimo.

When the Rev. Samuel Pollard began work among the Miao, an aboriginal tribe of western China, he found that they had no system of writing. He rejected the idea of introducing the Roman script, believing that it would be unable to convey accurately the subtle differences which variations in tone made in the speech of the people. He put aside the idea of

teaching the difficult Chinese characters. He felt that whatever the writing was it must be phonetic and easily understood. Then he remembered what Mr Evans had done for the Cree Indians and resolved to invent a similar system. He produced what has been described as an adaptation of Braille, Pitman's shorthand, and Roman signs. This has been used in printing the Scriptures for the Miao, and, with some modification, for other aboriginal tribes of China—Laka and Lisu.[1]

But these are exceptional cases. The great majority of missionaries who have reduced languages to writing have employed the alphabet to which they were accustomed from childhood—the Roman.

We are painfully aware of the chaotic nature of the English system of spelling. What is the sense of saying *bau* and writing *bough—hait* and writing *height*? It is certainly not English or French spelling that we wish to spread abroad. But linguistic pioneers have endeavoured to make the Roman alphabet the basis of phonetic spelling in Africa and other lands. It is not easy to do this. The Zulu language, to take but one instance out of many, contains seven simple vowel sounds, four diphthongs, thirty-six elementary plain consonant sounds, and nine click consonants—a total of sixty-three sounds, without counting various modifications.[2] How are these to be represented by the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet? It is easy to say that we should write phonetically—that is, write as we speak. The ideal is to have a separate

[1] W. A. Grist, *Samuel Pollard*, p. 286 *sqq.*

[2] C. M. Doke, *The Phonetics of the Zulu Language* (1926), p. 15.

sign for each sound, or rather for each phoneme. But even the most scientific phonetic system would fail to represent every sound, and every modification of sound, that may be heard. What is never uniform cannot be exhibited as uniform—and there is no uniformity in a people's pronunciation of their language. Individuals do not enunciate alike, and one person will vary from time to time—in passionate declamation an orator will pronounce words in a different way from that of ordinary conversation. An Englishman of the south differs from one of the north. A phonetic script cannot do more than record accurately the pronunciation of certain persons at the moment when their words are taken down.

To expect perfection in orthography is to be disappointed, but we ought to aim at it. The system advocated by the International Phonetic Association comes closer to the ideal than any other, and it is invaluable for precise scientific transcription. But for various reasons it is not suitable for use in schools on the mission field, where we require not a system that will represent every minute difference of speech-sound, but a simple alphabet that the pupils can learn to read accurately and quickly.

Our Roman alphabet as it stands does not meet the needs of every language, because it does not contain sufficient letters. In applying it to use linguists are divided into two schools: the one adding new letters to make up the deficiency, and the other using various dots and dashes over or below, before or after, the existing signs to indicate other sounds, or modifications. In the alphabet proposed for the writing of

African languages by the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, the use of some new letters is recommended, on the ground that diacritical marks are objectionable from the pedagogical, psychological, and typographical point of view.[1]

To all who have at heart the progress of Africans and other peoples, this matter is of the deepest interest. Here all the experience and knowledge gained by our experts in phonetics should be enlisted, and will, we may be sure, be willingly placed at our disposal. It is one of the fields where science can render immense service to the coming Kingdom of God.

[1] Memorandum No. 1, issued by the I.I.A.L.C., 22 Craven Street, London, W.C. 2. See also the article by Mr Lloyd James in *Africa*, vol. i., No. 1, p. 125 *et seqq.*

CHAPTER VI

HARMLESS DRUDGERY

I

In his *Dictionary of the English Language* Dr Samuel Johnson defined a lexicographer in these terms: "A writer of dictionaries; a harmless drudge." In the preface he dwells upon the fate of those who toil at "the lower employments" of life — men who are "exposed to censure, without hope of praise." "Among these unhappy mortals," he continues, "is the writer of dictionaries. . . . Every other author may aspire to praise; the lexicographer can only hope to escape reproach, and even this negative recompense has been yet granted to very few."

Makers of dictionaries, and with them the makers of grammars, are the drudges of the mission field. They are pioneers, but in comparison with other pioneers—the blazers of fresh trails into unknown lands—they win little renown outside a narrow circle of admirers. But their labours are fundamental: upon the foundation which they lay, every other enterprise of the Christian Church is built up. They dig and smelt the precious ore out of which the weapons of our warfare are fashioned. The whole business of spreading Christian truth in the world is, in the last resort, a matter of words. Upon a mastery of words depends the success of the evangelist, of the pastor, of the teacher—yes, even of the physician.

It is the unesteemed labour of the grammarian and lexicographer that renders practicable that mastery.

These are harmless drudges in common estimation. But the drudgery is more apparent to others than to themselves. They enjoy their task. They will tell you that the study of words is the most fascinating of all studies—words, their origin, their formation, their collocation to express thought. These men have their own adventures, and moments of ecstasy peculiar to themselves. As prospectors go in search of gems and gold, so these go in quest of words and rules of syntax. Some people may find it hard to believe, but it is nevertheless true that the harmless drudges get as much excitement out of hunting words as the Roosevelts get out of hunting lions, and are quite as happy over the discovery of an elusive grammatical rule as other prospectors over the discovery of a diamond. But, fascinating as it is, these men do not immerse themselves in this study for its own sake alone. They regard it as a means to an end. Put together in the right way, words may convey the message of God to needful souls.

II

If we are to appreciate the performance of these literary pioneers we must bear in mind the complexity and richness of the folk-tongues of the world.

Townspeople in our own land, who regard as a barbarism and a vulgarity any deviation from the standard English of the schools, are often heard to speak in contempt of country-speech. Superior

persons will tell you that a dialect is composed of "pidgin-English, bad spelling, provincialisms and preposterous grammar." As a matter of fact, an eminent expert is justified in saying that "rules for pronunciation and syntax are not the monopoly of educated people who have been taught to preach as well as practise them. Dialect-speaking people obey sound-laws and grammatical rules even more faithfully than we do, because theirs is a natural and unconscious obedience." [1] A famous philologist once fathered the preposterous assertion that the vocabulary of an illiterate English countryman does not exceed three hundred words. The sheer balderdash of it is at once evident when we turn over the pages of the *English Dialect Dictionary*, which in six large volumes enshrines the many varieties of folk-speech current in our land. They contain over a hundred thousand words. A peasant may be ignorant of many expressions familiar to dwellers in towns, but, on the other hand, he uses a rich vocabulary that is largely foreign to them. How many born Londoners could give you the name of, say, the smallest pig of a litter? Yet any Norfolk boy would answer without hesitation, "Pip'm, sir."

Now if people who do not know the facts pour contempt upon our rich and expressive folk-speech, much more do they despise the vernaculars of Africans and other barbarians. It seems not altogether unreasonable to suppose that an unclothed person speaks a lingo which is as bare and uncouth as himself, but

[1] Elizabeth Mary Wright, *Rustic Speech and Folk-Lore* (1913), p. iii.

the supposition finds little support in actual fact. People sometimes imagine and say that a translator of the Bible creates a language for the tribe. That would indeed be a remarkable achievement. But grammarians and lexicographers and translators do not create a language: they simply record and systematize and develop what is already in use. We are so obsessed by books that we can scarcely think of a language without a grammar. If by grammar we mean a volume in which rules and examples, with all the exceptions to the rules, are neatly set forth, then the barbarian, it is true, is grammar-less. He has no books, and could not, to save his life, give you a declension or a paradigm. Plato, we may remind ourselves, was in this respect no better off than a barbarian —he possessed no "grammar." But Plato spoke Greek, his mother-tongue, we may rightly suppose, more correctly than a public-school boy thoroughly drilled in the grammar can speak it. Illiterate Africans, who could not parse a sentence, speak their vernacular fluently and accurately; you may listen to them for years and never detect a solecism on the lines of the frequently-heard English, "He set you and I a fine example." If you hear anything unusual you may conclude, not that the speaker is ungrammatical but that your knowledge is still imperfect. The barbarian's speech is not structureless, a mere mass of sounds strung together at haphazard. It has its own laws, and the grammarian who puts it into written form does no more than make explicit what has all the time been implicit.

Many, if not all, the languages which the missionary

has to deal with are of an almost incredible richness and complexity. What we misname " primitive " is not necessarily simple. The tendency of language is to discard cumbrous formations. The English of King Alfred was much more complicated than the English of to-day. The European language which is richest in grammatical forms is Lithuanian, and that is spoken by a nation of peasants. Even Lithuanian falls short of the complexity of many languages into which missionaries have translated the Scriptures.

I have already, when speaking of the difficulties of learning a language, illustrated the extraordinary complexity of some forms of speech. Let us glance at the vocabularies.

How many words does a language contain ? We naturally suppose that the value of a language depends, in part, upon the extent of its vocabulary. But to count the words is not so easy as it might seem to be. For one thing, it is difficult to determine what is a word and what is not a word. Shall we reckon *match-box* as one, and *gas fire* as two ? Then we have to take suffixes into account : *Love* is one word, and from it we make lover, loveless, lovely, lovelily, loveliness, and so on. Are we to count up every possible form of a word in estimating the wealth of a vocabulary ? The great *Oxford Dictionary*, recently completed after forty-four years of preparation, contains a record of over four hundred and fourteen thousand words. Of these two hundred and forty thousand are main words, sixty-seven thousand subordinate words, forty-seven thousand special combinations, fifty-nine thousand obvious combinations. Since it is a dictionary not of

our English only but of all English, the English of Chaucer and of Shakespeare as well as of modern English, many of the words it records are no longer in use. Of the main words, a hundred and seventy-seven thousand are current. On the other hand, many words have come into being too late to be included: aeroplane and appendicitis, for example. "New words are born almost daily," said the editor, Dr Bradley. In view of these facts, who can say how many words the English language contains? Who can say how many words he knows and uses himself? No living person, it may safely be said, employs two hundred thousand in the course of his life. An ordinary citizen can manage with five thousand: an orator or writer will need more. It would be interesting to know the number used by our great writers in their books, but it seems that the people who have counted them do not agree. One person says there are twenty-four thousand words in Shakespeare, another says fifteen thousand; Milton's vocabulary is variously estimated at eight, twelve, and seventeen thousand. The English version of the Bible is said to contain seven thousand, but others say ten thousand.

The enormous accumulation that is at the disposal of a modern student of English is largely due, of course, to our adoption and adaptation of foreign words. If we are to compare the English vocabulary with that of less cultured peoples, it is unfair to take the *Oxford Dictionary* as a standard. How many words did King Alfred use? We do not know, but it has been estimated that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which is a

record of the most important transactions of our forefathers from their first arrival in this country to the year 1154, contains just on twelve thousand words, not all of which, however, are native Saxon.

From these considerations it is apparent that any vocabulary which contains from ten to twenty thousand words may be regarded as sufficient, not only for the needs of daily domestic, commercial, or political life, but also for any literary purposes, other than the technical-scientific.

Now when we turn to "uncivilized" languages we discover, perhaps to our surprise, that they possess vocabularies of considerable richness—"disconcerting richness," says one scholar. Take, for example, the dictionary of the Kongo language of Central Africa compiled by Dr Holman Bentley. It contains fourteen thousand Kongo words. There are also thousands of subordinate or derivative terms which Dr Bentley refrained from printing, for otherwise, he said, "the dictionary would have grown to a most immoderate size." And with few exceptions, all these words were commonly heard upon the lips of the illiterate folk among whom Dr Bentley lived. How many he did not record, because he never had an opportunity of hearing them, we do not know.

It is worth while repeating here what Bentley said about the Kongo language.

At every point and turn new surprises were met with, as the richness, flexibility, exactness, subtlety of idea, and nicety of expression of the language revealed themselves. All this richness of speech is at the disposal of the lad who has been my chief helper, and

he, not selected, but coming to me by chance, as far as such a word can be safely used. We find then the Kongos speak a language so exact and truthful that the tricks, the double intention, the falsities and illogical perversions which are so freely perpetrated in European languages would not be possible in Kongo argument. Half the quibbles and mountains of reasoning, thrown up upon strained usages of words and indefinite expressions, which have vexed and separated sections of the Christian Church, could trouble no Kongo, with so exact and definite a speech at their command.

Now what is said about Kongo applies, to a greater or less extent, to the speech of other Africans.

We find them peoples, whose language is superior to themselves, illiterate folk, with an elaborate and regular grammatical system of speech of such subtlety and exactness of idea that its daily use is in itself an education.[1]

III

From what we have said, the conclusion might be drawn that an African or other barbarian possesses a vocabulary as rich as Shakespeare's. But words must be weighed as well as counted. It does not at all follow that because fourteen thousand words of the Kongo language have been recorded that the supreme dramatist, if he knew that tongue as he knew English, could have expressed all his thoughts in Kongo as well as he could in English.

[1] W. Holman Bentley, *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language* (1887), xxiii. These words were written forty years ago. "The lad" mentioned, Nlenvo, who assisted Bentley in this work and in translating the Scriptures, is still alive (1928), but blind.

A language expresses the needs of its speakers. It reflects in the range of its vocabulary the degree of culture to which they have attained. We may naturally expect a people to have names for every object they see, for every concept they form, for every action they make. But they will not have terms for anything beyond their experience, any more than King Alfred had a word for appendicitis, or Shakespeare for an aeroplane.

As they mount the scale of human civilization, men's needs and capacities grow, and their vocabularies increase in wealth accordingly. A people like the Baganda, who have developed a high degree of social organization, necessarily use a great many terms that are not needed by a nomadic hunting tribe. And when we come to nations who are highly civilized, like the Chinese and many peoples of India, we find vocabularies more comparable with our own.

IV

How does the lexicographer collect the material for his dictionary ?

The *Oxford Dictionary* was based upon the voluntary labours of some hundreds of people who read books on all subjects and wrote words and quotations on slips of paper. These slips, which came to number millions, were sorted and studied by the sub-editors and editors—a task of considerable magnitude. Dr Johnson collected his own material, much of it from older dictionaries.

Some of the harmless drudges, like Morrison in

China and Carey in India, are able to quarry from an indigenous literature ; but the majority, who make dictionaries for illiterate people, have no alternative but, in Dr Johnson's words, to plunge into " the boundless chaos of living speech, to glean up words by courting living information."

I look back to the days when I collected the Ila vocabulary in Northern Rhodesia. It was no cloistered task. I have related in the first chapter the way in which I acquired the magic phrase, *Chinzhi chechi ?* " What is this ? " and how I pestered with it all sorts and conditions of men. Every new word gained was at once recorded in my notebook and, when checked, was transferred to slips of paper in an alphabetical index-drawer. As a pioneer missionary I had to build my house with the aid of men who had not previously made a brick or handled a trowel or hammer or saw. It entailed working for many hours a day for many months on end, under the tropical sun, in the midst of a chattering gang of men. I never attempted to repress their loquacity, for here was my dictionary, alive and vociferous. At first, the talk was meaningless to me, but some oft-repeated word or phrase would separate itself from the whirling torrent of sound ; and then trowel or saw was dropped and the ever-ready notebook was taken from my pocket and the word or phrase set down for further inquiry. In course of time I began to understand more of what was said in my presence, and then the notebook filled up rapidly. When evening brought a welcome respite from manual toil, the words gathered during the day would be conned and arranged. Among my workmen

was a youth who seemed to be of superior intelligence. His laugh was always among the loudest ; his flow of speech appeared inexhaustible, and his enunciation was distinct and clear. I was drawn to him and singled him out as my instructor. He proved to be a very useful person, and from that time onward, as long as I remained in the country, Shamatanga acted as my principal assistant in all literary work. His knowledge of his language amazed me. He knew no other tongue, and until I taught him was unable to read and write. He learnt these arts rapidly, and was then able to record for me many words and tales that he collected from other people.

Every day I added to my growing vocabulary. For months and years I lived in a whirl of words ; I ate them, drank them, dreamed them.

Before long I noticed that disyllabic words on the model of *ba-ba, ba-mpa, ma-la,* abounded in the Ila speech. It occurred to me to write down every possible combination of such syllables. Then occasionally I would select haphazardly from the list of hypothetical forms and ask Shamatanga, " What does *buza* mean ? " Sometimes I drew a blank, but more often by means of this guessing I secured words that were very useful, and not a few that were uncommon.

For the purpose of listening to their talk, I made it a practice to frequent places where men gathered. In particular, I used to sit for hours in the courtyard where the Chief and his councillors settled the affairs of the community. Africans are natural orators, and when I was able to follow their speeches I gleaned a harvest of useful words and phrases from them. At

first I wrote these down in my notebook openly, but I found that this attracted too much attention. I therefore adopted the plan of jotting down my notes surreptitiously on the sleeve of my white jacket. This worked well for a time, but one morning I heard a man say to his neighbour: "Look at him; he's at it again. And, see, he is writing on his coat!" It was all intensely amusing to the people. They had known white men who came hunting game, and also some strange people who collected insects; but I was the only one they knew who seemed to be mad on words. It was, at first, quite incomprehensible to them, but when in course of time they saw books in their own language they began to realize that there was method in the missionary's madness. It was in those years of word-hunting that I gained my name, Chitutamano —a word susceptible of a twofold rendering; my wife said it meant, "The silent spirit who has wisdom," but I prefer the other meaning, "The quiet cunning devil."

My revered master in linguistic study, the late M. Jacottet of Basutoland, had counselled me to record the Ila folk-lore, not only for its intrinsic value but also as a means of learning the grammar. I possessed no phonograph, but began to write down tales from dictation. It was at first a slow and painful process. I could not understand what I was writing. The Natives were unused to dictating and found it difficult to tell the stories slowly enough for me to write down their words. But I persevered and eventually filled hundreds of foolscap sheets with tales, historical incidents, traditions, songs, proverbs, accounts

of customs. In this way I collected hundreds of words all in their context. It was by collating and analysing this mass of material that I came to understand the grammatical rules of the language. People, of course, speak in sentences and not usually in isolated words. It was not easy, especially in the early stages, to separate out the individual words and to decide which were main words and which subordinate, but gradually the tangle was unravelled. The study of this wonderful language was a never-failing source of delight.

I suppose all workers in this field follow more or less the methods I adopted. No doubt some lexicographers have their own ways. It has even been possible to buy words.

The Rev. Dr Gunn of the Presbyterian Mission, who laboured in the New Hebrides for nearly a quarter of a century, tells of his difficulty in getting suitable words for certain expressions. He writes :

After some years in the island [of Futuna], I offered to pay the Natives at a fixed rate for every hundred words they brought me. The more intelligent of the younger men would write down lists of words, sometimes getting from the older men words that were not in general use. For all those that were new to me, I gave them a present equal to about ninepence per hundred words. In this way I added considerably to my vocabulary.

It sometimes happens that every conceivable method fails to discover a word which the missionary requires, and then one day it just drops down upon the happy seeker when he is not looking for it. In

early days among the Ba-ila I sought an equivalent to "trust" with as much eagerness as a boy will hunt a trout. I endeavoured to get it by direct questioning; I told little stories in the hope that comments upon them would reveal the word. But all in vain. Then, as I began to fear that the language was barren in this respect, one day I was papering the sitting-room of the house which I had built. I was mounted on a long and rickety ladder, and was about to stretch up to fix the paper in the top corner, when I heard one of my workmen say: "If I were the missionary I would not trust this ladder; he will break his neck." The word at last! It could not mean anything else. I dropped the paper and scrambled down, not because I was afraid of breaking my neck, but in order to seize that precious word "trust" and record it in writing before it should escape.

The Rev. A. E. Ruskin of the Belgian Congo tells an amusing tale of his search for and discovery of the word for "salted" which occurs in Mark ix. 49: "For everyone shall be salted with fire." The noun could be found, but not the verb. Mr Ruskin sometimes bought words, and occasionally when he heard other speakers use terms which he had discovered he would say to himself: "Ah, that word cost me threepence!" But he could not buy a word for "salted." He worried people so much that at last they suspected he was out of his mind. Some of them consulted their head-man about it. "When we go to the mission station," they told him, "that tall white man with a beard always ask the same question. It has something to do with salt. What is it?" The

head-man promised to inquire, and on his way to the mission met Mr Ruskin. Mr Ruskin, seeing him approach, said to himself: "Ah, this man will be able to tell me!" So, after saluting the head-man, he drew him aside to a seat by the wayside and began: "Can you tell me the word for . . ." "Oh!" the head-man interrupted, "then it's true that you are somewhat wrong in the head!" Mr Ruskin explained, but to no purpose. When Mrs Ruskin arrived on the Congo, he thought that the cook-house would be the most likely place to hear "salted" mentioned. But the cook regarded his entrance with suspicion. Had not the master once taken a pot away and made glue in it? What was he up to now? Braving these misrepresentations of his motive, Mr Ruskin continued to haunt the cook-house, and one day was rewarded. The word dropped out while Mrs Ruskin was giving some direction about the joint for next day's dinner. By the way he rushed out he excited the cook's suspicions. He followed and said: "What did you take?" "Nothing but a word," was the incomprehensible reply. He had hurried out to write down the word for "salted." When afterwards he told the people that he had found it, they said: "Why, we knew it all the time!" [1]

V

But even the most persistent efforts could not possibly find words which do not exist, because the objects or ideas which they represent are totally un-

[1] A. E. Ruskin, on "Translating the Scriptures," in *Regions Beyond*, March 1907.

known to the people. How could you expect a word for "snow" in the torrid regions of West Africa where snow has never been seen, or for "cow" in an island of the southern seas where the biggest animals were pigs and dogs? How are you going to render "flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer" in a translation for the Samoyedes of Siberia, whose only music is a sorcerer's drum? When medical missionaries of the Church Missionary Society began to train Baganda students at the Mengo hospital they found that the language contained no terms for artery, or vein, or nerve, because, while these things existed, they were not distinguished one from another, and no word for solid, or liquid, or gas, no words to express shape or structure, because the people had never had occasion to name them. And if such words are absent from a relatively well-developed language like Luganda, we cannot be surprised that it is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to find terms to express the great Christian truths that God is a Spirit and God is love. A missionary has not only to convert and baptize heathen people; he must convert their language and baptize their vocabulary, before it is fit to speak the message of the Gospel and convey the mind of Christ. Let it be remembered, however, that the early missionaries in England had to do the same for our own tongue.

There are blanks in all vocabularies. How are these to be supplied?

Manifestly, there are two ways of doing it: you may borrow words from other tongues; or you may utilize the resources of the language itself, by making

new words from old roots or by extending the meaning of existing words.

When Christianity was introduced into England and the islanders began to absorb the culture of more highly civilized communities, and later when the Bible was translated into English speech, the language was quite inadequate to express all the new ideas. At first some resistance was offered to the introduction of foreign words, and an attempt was made to create their equivalent from native material. Some of these coined terms have remained to this day, such as *godspell* (which became gospel), but others were displaced by Latin terms; *leorningcniht* (learning boy) was discarded for "disciple" (from Latin *discipulus*, little learner), *rod* (literally gallows) gave way to "cross" (Latin, *crux*) and remains only in modern English as rood, the rood-screen of a church, and so on; *again-buyer* was an early formation for "redeemer," but this Latin word prevailed. It is estimated that of the different words now in our English Bible only about forty per cent are native. The English language has absorbed about a quarter of the whole Latin vocabulary, as well as a large proportion of the Greek, and some elements from almost every form of speech with which the British people have come into contact. The Germans have not been so ready to borrow, but have very largely continued to coin words as the Anglo-Saxons did when they needed new terms for the new ideas.

These two methods of filling up a vocabulary—borrowing from abroad and using indigenous material—have been, and still are, employed in languages

other than European. Considerable numbers of English and other foreign words become absorbed, often taking on a form and a meaning that render them almost unrecognizable. In Nigeria a certain tax is commonly known as the *Adenkia*. It was assessed by the Government upon a town as a whole, the apportionment of individual contributions being left to the Chief. When it was first introduced one of the Chiefs asked an official how the tax was to be collected, and he replied, "I don't care." The official's "I don't care" was transmuted into *Adenkia*, and so a new word came into the language. In the Hausa language our "head-man" has been naturalized as *heliman* and given a regular native plural, *helimanyoyi*. The Baptist missionaries on the Congo carefully distinguished their personal belongings from mission property. Cases of mission goods were labelled "B.M.S." The Natives made a word out of these initials—*Biemessi*—to mean "common property" or "common responsibility." A missionary in Central Africa announced exultantly to his colleagues that he had discovered a new and most valuable word for trickery—*lawiya*. Further investigation revealed it to be our "lawyer." Early missionaries in Nyasaland wanted a rendering for Hell. They must have described it in rather lurid terms, for in answer to their inquiry the Natives gave them the word *stoko*. It was duly used in translating the Gospels, until it was discovered to be a derivation of the English "stokehold." Natives working on the lake-steamers had taken the word from the engineers.

These curious examples, which might be multiplied

almost indefinitely from all parts of the world, illustrate the facility with which people adopt and adapt foreign words. Languages are continually growing in this way. Lexicographers and translators deliberately introduce many such new terms; some of them are ultimately rejected by the people in favour perhaps of terms coined by themselves, but others find a permanent home in the language. If we glance through some versions of Scripture we shall easily identify English words incorporated therein. In the New Testament as prepared for the Mosquito Indians by Moravian missionaries we find *God, king, priest, prophet, angel, devil, heaven, holy, married.* What an immense moral and spiritual blank is implied by such gaps in a vocabulary—gaps only to be filled by borrowing from abroad! Even versions in much richer languages necessarily contain a fair sprinkling of terms taken from English, Greek, and other tongues. In the Ila Testament we of deliberate purpose borrowed as few as possible, but were compelled to use some: *bangelo* (angels), *hekalu* (temple), *ingolida* (gold), *matalenta* (talents), *kubapatiza* (to baptize), and so on.

Translators differ in principle about the introduction of foreign words. The purists (among whom I include myself) prefer to use vernacular terms even when they cannot originally mean all that the New Testament words have come to mean to ourselves. We prefer, for example, to use in Ila the vernacular *makani mainu* (literally, "fat tidings") rather than transliterate the Greek word for Gospel, *evangelium*. Rather than bring in a form like *profita* we would use the native name for a prophet or forth-teller. Roman Catholic

missionaries, in particular, seem to prefer to naturalize Latin and Greek terms.

Many translators consider it better to transliterate the sacred names, God, and Holy Spirit, rather than employ inadequate vernacular terms. It is necessary, of course, in that case, to teach the meaning of the new terms. Where the opposite course is taken one hopes, by means of oral instruction to fill up the old terms with a Christian content.

The majority of the languages with which our lexicographers and translators deal are living forms of speech. The people are continually making new words according to the genius of their vernaculars. These have their laws of word formation which the lexicographer may discover for himself and in accordance with them coin many of the words which he needs. It is a dangerous proceeding, however, as many a man has found. In the Kimbundu language of Angola the missionaries found a verb, to love (*kuzola*), but no noun, but they thought that by omitting the infinitive prefix *ku* they would get the noun *zola*. One day a missionary was speaking very earnestly and using this word *zola*, while the Natives sat completely mystified. Finally one of them turned to his neighbour and said: "I know what he means; he is talking about those big iron fish-hooks." *Zola* actually meant a hook of that kind.

Mistakes happen in this way, but with the assistance of skilled Natives missionaries do succeed in coining words which become positive enrichments of the language. When the Moravians first went among the Eskimos of Labrador they could find no word for

forgiveness, so they evolved the splendid picture-word *issuma-vokgijaujungnainermik*, which means, literally, not being able to think about it any more. The Mosquito Indian word for forgiveness means in literal English: To take a man's fault out of your heart. In the same language "God's mercy" takes the form of "The law of God's white heart."

Another method of filling up blanks with Native material is to extend the significance of some common term. To illustrate this process we may recall the various meanings which, in response to need, we English people have given to the word "post." Experts in language speak of polysemeia, the faculty which words possess of assuming different meanings.[1]

The new spiritual experiences that are the outcome of Christianity are described by the people, or defined by the missionary, in the terms of what is already known. An African aptly defined "faith" as "the hand of the heart." Dr J. G. Paton could find no word for "trust" in the language of the South Sea islanders among whom he worked. He illustrated what he wanted by sitting upon a chair, putting up his feet, and committing his whole weight to it. He got a word which meant literally "to lean one's whole weight upon," and this was used in translating the New Testament. Thus in answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" the Apostle's answer reads,

[1] As another example, take the word *bureau*. It meant first of all a kind of drugget, then a piece of furniture covered with this material, a piece of furniture used for writing, a room containing this article, occupations carried on there and the persons engaged and ultimately a group of persons directing an organization.

"Lean thy whole weight upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

To sum up. Barbarian languages have their structural laws, which are frequently very complex. Their vocabularies are in some respects exuberant, but, since they reflect a relatively low state of culture, are deficient in other respects. They are capable of immense development. As new ideas are planted in the minds of people they find, or make, new terms to express them. The harmless drudges of the mission field, the lexicographers and grammarians, take the first steps in this development by recording the languages as they find them and by filling up some of the blanks in the vocabulary. It is a delightful, though arduous, task. What they do is preparatory to creating the beginnings of a literature and, in particular, to the translation of the Scriptures.

CHAPTER VII

BREAKING THE SHELL

I

TRANSLATION is the full rendering into one tongue of what has appeared in another; or, in Dr James Moffatt's words, to translate is to convey the truth and sense or even the forms of a work from one language to another. In common estimation it does not rank among the highest of literary arts, but it is a very necessary one. Not all the world's wisdom lies enshrined in a single language. Men of many nations have co-operated in building the temple of human knowledge. If a scholar were limited to what has been recorded in his native tongue he would be poorly off. What should we English people have been without the literature of Italy and Greece?—without the Holy Scriptures? No doubt it is best to read books in the languages in which they were originally written. But to comparatively few people is it given to read Homer and Plato and Aristotle and Virgil in Greek and Latin with ease and enjoyment, and even fewer can read the Old Testament in Hebrew. Some people may acquire half a dozen languages sufficiently for ordinary purposes, but life is too short to learn every tongue in which books have been written that are worth reading. Hence the value of translations: they enable us to enrich our minds at the cost of a minimum of mental effort. The translator has been compared to a ferry-

man. He has also been likened to one that openeth a window to let in the light; and translation to breaking a shell that we may eat the kernel, to removing the cover of a well that we may come by the water.

Translation is an important and essential art, but difficult and indeed dangerous. Some eminent writers have endeavoured to show that in the full sense of the term it is impossible; that no man, however able, can put from one tongue into another without scanting the meaning. They quote the Italian proverb, *Traduttore traditore* (a translator is a betrayer).

The ideal translator would be fully bilingual; that is to say, he would speak and think from the days of his childhood with equal facility in both the language he translates from and the language he translates into. Mr Belloc rightly lays down as a canon of the art that to translate French into Spanish you need a Spanish mind; to translate German into English you need an English mind; and we may go further and say that to translate from Hebrew into Zulu you need a Zulu mind. I should prefer to say that, if he is to do the work thoroughly, the translator from Hebrew into Zulu needs both a Hebrew and a Zulu mind. There have been such translators, but they are few in number. The majority who undertake the task know their mother-tongue fairly well, but have acquired the other in adult life, and, however well they may know it, it is not theirs.

We know the kind of mistake that occurs because of insufficient knowledge. We have only to recall our efforts when we were schoolboys. Every collection of "howlers" provides specimens. And it is not difficult

to gather equally bad blunders from published translations.

These are mere stupidities due to carelessness or ignorance. Some of them would be avoided by a more intelligent use of the dictionary. There are, of course, dictionaries and dictionaries, and a crude list of words, without definitions and illustrative sentences, is a delusion and a snare to the translator. Even the best dictionary cannot be a substitute for actual, first-hand, precise, and intimate knowledge of the life of the people into whose tongue you are translating, and indeed of the people from whose tongue you are translating. Language is a transcript of life, and the experience, the thought, of one people may differ so considerably from another's that the words they use, though apparently synonyms, may in reality be far asunder in meaning. Dr James Moffatt, who translated the whole Bible into modern English, declared that perhaps the most vexing of all the woes that haunt the translator's work is the finding of English equivalents for ancient terms. How, without creating very serious misconceptions, are we to translate ancient psychological and philosophical terms, of whose precise significance at any one period of their history we are doubtful or ignorant? Familiarity with grammars and dictionaries is not enough; the translator, if he is to succeed, must know intimately the life of the people.

Dangers constantly confront the translator of Scripture who has not made a close study of native customs and thought. One missionary, for example, in the verse, "Take up thy bed and walk," used the

vernacular term for a clay platform upon which people sleep, thus making the injunction mere nonsense. Sir George Grierson, the eminent scholar, well points out that an apparently harmless mistake may lead to the gravest error. In one part of India he found that it was the almost universal belief that the God of the Christians was sky-blue in colour. This idea had arisen from some version of the Lord's Prayer in which "Our Father which art in heaven" was rendered "our Heavenly Father," and the word used to translate "heavenly" was generally taken to mean "having the colour of the sky."

Now a man who translates the Scriptures for a modern people may save himself from many blunders by a prolonged and patient study of their life and thought, but unless he has an equal knowledge of the people from whose language he is translating he is still liable to make serious errors. It is not given to many men, if to any, to have that perfect knowledge of ancient life and thought; and this is tantamount to saying that it is impossible for an ordinary person to make a perfect translation of the Bible.

We come to another argument tending in the same direction. There is an excellent French translation, by Monsieur P. Grolier, of *The Pickwick Papers*. In that immortal work, it will be remembered, Mr. Jingle described Sir Thomas Blazo's cricket match in the West Indies. This is how he talked: "Quanko Samba—last man left—sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown—five hundred and seventy runs—rather exhausted—Quanko mustered up last remaining strength—bowled me out—had a bath, and went out

to dinner." A listener to this enthralling tale asked Mr Jingle what became of Quanko Samba, and he replied: "Poor Quanko—never recovered it—bowled on, on my account, bowled off, on his own—died, sir." M. Grolier made a gallant attempt to render that bit of idiomatic English; thus: "Pauvre Quanko! n'en releva jamais, quitta le jeu, quitta la vie, mourut, monsieur." Putting this back into literal English we get: "Poor Quanko! never recovered from it, gave up the game, gave up life—died, sir." Now that conveys the sense; it leaves us under no misapprehension as to poor Quanko's end. But as a translation it will not do. It misses the inimitable humour and pathos of that *bowled on, bowled off*. It is impossible to render that into French. Cricket is our national game, it has entered into our blood, coloured our daily speech. Frenchmen may learn to play it well, but it can never be to them what it is to us. They have no equivalent phrases for *bowling on, bowling off*.

Schoolboys are drilled—in the old days were flogged—out of the error that, in translating, one word can merely be substituted for another. Words in one language do not precisely equal words in another. It is so even in regard to English and French, which have so much in common. The two peoples share one civilization. Yet the connotation of French words scarcely ever tallies completely with that of the nearest English rendering. Even many words spelt identically, or almost so, in the two languages are not precisely synonymous. The meanings overlap. French *diligent* is not the same as English diligent, any more

than *assistant* has the same connotation in both languages.

This brings us to a radical objection to translation.

Thought must be clothed. The artist may put his thoughts on canvas, and they who see his picture will, in their several degrees, enter into his mind. Another artist may put his thoughts into music and it will appeal to men and women of many nationalities, with no need for translation—though with limitations, for the written notes must be transmuted into sounds, and a piece of music written for an organ will not be adequately rendered on a kettle-drum. The artist may also express himself in speech or writing. Language is a garment, and more than a garment, of thought ; the relation between the two is so intimate that to separate them is not to strip off, it is to flay. When a tailor makes clothes he takes pains to fit them to his customer's figure ; they will suit him because they are made for him ; we should not expect a giant's coat to fit Tom Thumb. A master selects words as appropriate, not only because they express his thought logically, but also because by some subtle combination of vowel and consonant they suggest the ideas they stand for ; he arranges them rhythmically to set forth as perfectly as he knows how his thoughts on some profound theme. A Dante, if he knew English as well as he knew his native Italian, might transfuse his thought from one medium to the other ; but how can a lesser mind do it for him, reproducing the thought, rhythm, cadence, every elusive quality that makes the *Divina Commedia* what it is ? And how shall he render the poem into a

language that does not possess the resources of Dante's Italian ? And if this is impossible in regard to Dante, how far is it possible in regard to the inspired writers of the Bible ? If it is objected that what we have said applies less to prose than to poetry, let it be recalled that much of the Bible is poetry, and very much of it is prose that has the qualities of poetry.

M. Maurice Maeterlinck, who rendered *Macbeth* into French, puts it in this way :

Translators face to face with Shakespeare are like painters seated in front of the same landscape. Each will make a different picture ; and for this reason, that around the literal sense of the words there floats a secret life which is all but impossible to catch, and which is, nevertheless, more important than the external life of the words and of the images.

The range of human thoughts and emotions greatly transcends the range of such symbols as man has invented to express them. Words mean more to one man than to another, for words possess not only a face value but all that they may suggest through the imagination. The literal sense is only a small part of what they signify. They have also a power over the mind which is like the power of music, and this is what the translator cannot communicate to his version, because he cannot analyse it, and has no command of the process by which Shakespeare, and others, charged their words with it. This power is the power of emotion, and translation becomes difficult always in proportion to the amount of emotion that is successfully expressed in the original. The logical meaning of words can be exactly understood ; their emotional

force cannot. This is what we mean when we speak of the overtones of language. The enduring loveliness of many a line of poetry, and of many a passage in the higher prose, resides in these overtones. No man can express all their meaning; they appeal to different men in different ways. Many persons may attempt to translate them into another tongue, and to some degree may succeed, but to give the full and final translation is beyond their power.

There are other very real difficulties in translation, for example, the difference between languages in grammatical structure and in the order of words in a sentence. In the preface to his translation of Plato, Dr B. Jowett pointed out some of the fundamental differences in Greek and English, "of which some may be managed while others remain intractable." The New Testament Greek is not Plato's Greek, but translators of the New Testament into English find it impossible sometimes to render all the fine distinctions marked in the original. Those who attempt to put the New Testament into other languages experience similar, and perhaps even greater, difficulties. Prepositions always cause them more trouble than any other part of speech; how is one to put Greek, which abounds in prepositions, into an African tongue which, properly speaking, has no prepositions at all? St Paul's pregnant sentence, "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things," tests the translator's knowledge and ingenuity. The use or omission of the definite article may alter materially the meaning of a phrase. In St Matthew xiii. 55, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" signifies, "Is not this a son of the

carpenter who is well known to us?" In many African and other languages (as in Latin and Sanskrit) there is no definite article, and so it is impossible, without paraphrasing, to show this difference in meaning. In languages of the southern seas, like Futuna, the pronouns have four numbers—singular, plural, dual, and trial—and the first person pronoun in each number has two forms—exclusive and inclusive. This causes much uncertainty in translation. For instance, the words of the disciples to the Master when they were in the boat: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" (St Mark iv. 38). Before that can be rendered accurately into Futuna it must be decided how many persons were in the boat, and whether "we" includes Christ or not; and who is to say what is the correct answer to these questions? These are but a few out of numerous examples that might be given to show what differences exist between languages, and the difficulty, even the impossibility, of rendering from one to another with absolute precision.

It is considerations such as these that lead some authorities to maintain that the Italian proverb, *Traduttore traditore*, is true—that translation is impossible.

Mr J. Lewis May once expressed this conviction to Anatole France, and the great French writer replied: "Precisely, my friend, the recognition of that truth is a necessary preliminary to success in that art."[1]

[1] J. Lewis May in *The Edinburgh Review*, January 1927.

II

We have reviewed some of the arguments against the possibility of translation. If these were pressed to their logical conclusion, they would prove that a master mind could not, even in his own tongue, convey his thoughts to any other person, except perhaps to one who thought precisely as he thought, and used an identical vocabulary. Each man's speech differs in some respects from that of his fellows. It seems to follow, then, that we must always translate what we read or hear into our own notation, and if our intercourse is with a mind greatly superior to our own, there is almost sure to be some lack of apprehension on our part—the translation is inadequate. Language is never a perfect instrument for the expression of thought. If I read Plato or Cicero or Kant or Dante in the original, I must translate, not into my own speech but into the terms of my own experience; I must do the same if I read Shakespeare or Browning in English; and since those great writers could not say all they wanted to say because of the limitations of their medium, and because I do not know fully what the words used by them signified to them, I am bound to fall short of perfect understanding. Yet I can learn much from them. I should be foolish to refuse to read them because I could not hope to comprehend them completely; I must make up my mind to study them with care, and use every assistance that men more expert than myself can afford me.

Similarly, we cannot refrain from translating from

one language into another because a perfect translation is impossible. If a perfect literary translation is unachievable, something less than perfect may serve a very useful purpose. As a matter of fact, the experts tell us that translations exist which are as adequate as translations can be made. We have good reasons for wishing that men of every nation should know the moral and spiritual truths contained in the Bible, and should be able to read the book for themselves. We cannot expect that they will all be able to read the original Hebrew and Greek. Translation is necessary for nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of every thousand. We must not be deterred because it may be impossible to produce a perfect rendering. Keats, it is said, became a Grecian through the study of Chapman's faulty translation of Homer ; it is possible to drink deeply of the classical spirit even in inadequate renderings ; and men may learn much of Christ, even though the translation of the Gospels contains errors.

Our English version of the Bible has been described by Sir A. Quiller-Couch as the most majestic thing in our literature. It has sunk deeply into the British soul, and more than any other single factor has shaped our national character. Yet it is a translation. Hundreds of people have read it without realizing that it is a translation. Perhaps it is the greatest that was ever made. Every tyro in Hebrew and Greek can point out where it fails to give a perfect rendering. Scholars tell us that some passages misrepresent the original text. The Revised Version was necessary, not only because many English words and

phrases had become archaic since the Authorized Version was produced, but also because prolonged study of the original text, and new discoveries, had made manifest its imperfections. We do not imagine that the Revised Version is the final one. Dr Moffatt and other scholars have given us new renderings that, while failing to recapture the music of the old, are certainly more accurate in many respects. The ideal translation of the Bible into English has yet to be made. But the fact remains that, as Mr W. E. Gladstone said of the Bible in its foreign dress, "it retains all its power to pierce the thoughts of the heart; it still remains sharper than a two-edged sword; it still divides bone and marrow. It does its work."

This is true of other versions besides the English. God's eternal message can come home, and does come home, to men's hearts in spite of defects in its literary medium. Even crude and imperfect versions prove vehicles of spiritual grace and truth.

The translator of the Bible enjoys certain advantages over those who render the classics into English. Both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament are eminently translatable languages. As Professor J. H. Moulton says of the latter: "The Holy Ghost spoke absolutely in the language of the people, as we might surely have expected He would." [1] To translate the New Testament, therefore, into English or other languages is not so difficult as to translate some of the Greek philosophers and poets.

[1] James Hope Moulton, in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, p. 593.

Translators into other languages may not always have the wealth of vocabulary, so largely borrowed, that is at the disposal of translators into English and other European tongues ; but in other respects, and especially in regard to the Old Testament, they have an advantage. To render the Hebrew Scriptures into Arabic and other Semitic languages is comparatively easy. Since Urdu (the vernacular of fifteen millions of people in India) and other forms of speech, influenced largely by Arabic, contain a large number of Arabic words, it is often possible for translators to follow the Hebrew text more closely than it would be in English. African languages possess some features that make translation into them easier in certain respects than from Hebrew into English. They resemble Hebrew in the paucity of particles and adjectives and in the manner in which the verb can be modified to express various shades of meaning. Of the shades of meaning which the Hebrews could express by means of these five " themes," the ordinary reader of the English Bible can have no idea ; [1] but they are very largely reproducible in Bantu tongues.

Almost all Hebrew words can be traced back to roots denoting originally something that can be grasped by the senses ; intellectual ideas are expressed largely by roots of concrete significance, and the passions by words indicating primarily the organs of the body. In these respects many " barbarous " languages resemble Hebrew. In Ila, as in many other languages, the Hebrew idiom can often be rendered directly, as when " to be heavy " means " to be

[1] G. R. Driver, in *The People and the Book* (1927), p. 77.

honoured." Moreover, Africans and other peoples live much at the same stage of culture as peoples we read of in the Old Testament, and their vocabularies provide exact equivalents of various Hebrew words used in connection with religion and magic. This is what we mean when we say that translators into these languages enjoy certain advantages over translators into English.

We may take an illustration from the Kafir version of the Bible made for Bantu tribes in South Africa. The first translation by a Wesleyan missionary proved unsatisfactory, so a committee was formed to produce another. It included Tiyo Soga, a Kafir descended from a long line of warriors, orators, and thinkers, and a Presbyterian minister trained in Scotland ; the Rev. J. Chalmers, born and brought up in Kafirland and a man of fine poetic gifts ; the Rev. Dr A. Kropf, a German scholar, and compiler of the standard Kafir dictionary ; the Hon. Charles Brownlee, son of a missionary, a public servant with a very deep knowledge of the people ; and the Rev. Bryce Ross, who had read Kafir, Hebrew, and Greek from his childhood : a very strong team. They worked at the translation for a large number of years. " The outcome," says the Rev. Brownlee J. Ross, " is a Kafir Bible which is, to one who can really think in the language and study it with the originals, a perfect gem. The poetic parts, while close translations, are quivering with life, rhythm, and poetry as the English never can." The Kafir reproduces perfectly, without straining, Hebrew puns like the triple pun in Proverbs xxx. 33 ; and in a difficult passage like Deuteronomy xviii. 10–11.

where the English fails to bring out the distinctions between the various practices dealt with, the Kafir gives the correct technical terms, the same rites being practised all over Kafirland.

The ideally perfect translation may be beyond the dreams of man, but a good translation is practicable. The translators of our Authorized Version put it in this way: "A man may be counted a virtuous man though he have made many slips in his life, also a comely man and lovely though he have some warts upon his hand, yea, not only freckles upon his face but also scars."

III

The object of a translation, says Dr B. Jowett,

should not simply be to render the words of one language into the words of another, or to preserve the construction and order of the original; this is the ambition of a schoolboy, who wishes to show that he has made a good use of his Dictionary and Grammar; but is quite unworthy of the translator, who seeks to produce on his reader an impression similar or nearly similar to that produced by the original.[1]

Another great authority, Dr James Moffatt, says: "The ideal of a translator is to let his readers enjoy part of the pleasure which the original once afforded to its audience in some far-off century."[2]

No man would embark lightly upon such a respon-

[1] B. Jowett, Preface to *The Dialogues of Plato, translated into English*, 3rd edition, p. xiv.

[2] James Moffatt, Preface to his *Translation of the Old Testament*, p. vii.

sible task, if he had a right sense of the importance of it and realized the difficulties which we have touched upon in this chapter. Three things are essential to a translation of Holy Scripture: it must be faithful to the original text; it must be intelligible to the people for whom it is intended; and it must be beautiful in style.

Fidelity to the original text implies, in the first place, familiarity with it. Some versions of the New Testament, and more of the Old, have been made from the English version by men who knew no Greek or Hebrew. Roman Catholic translators have, as a rule, taken the Latin Vulgate as their basis, even when they knew Greek. But a translation of a translation can never be satisfactory.

The translator must not only know the original, but must know it very well indeed. "Think of St Paul," says Dr T. R. Glover, "and remember that, if you are to give him faithfully to Congo man or Khond, you have to know him almost by heart in the Greek—to know him till you know you don't, one might say." And, of course, you must know the other language equally well.

Fidelity to the text implies also a very honest mind. It will not do to allow one's prejudices to colour or distort one's rendering. A strong Calvinist is liable unconsciously to construe a passage in favour of his doctrine. A man who believes that the Mother of our Lord never bore but one Son may try to convey the impression that our Lord's "brethren" (as in St Matthew xii. 46) were not his brothers: I have before me a French version in which the words are

rendered *ses proches*. However strong our convictions on total abstinence may be, we are not justified in tampering with the text so as to render wine (as in the account of the marriage feast at Cana) by a word meaning unfermented juice. Whatever use or abuse his version may be put to, the translator must be unflinchingly honest to the text.

It was the wish of Erasmus that the ploughman might sing parts of Scripture at his plough and the weaver at his shuttle. If that noble ambition inspires the translator, he will seek to make his version intelligible not only to scholars but to "the very vulgar," as the Preface to our Authorized Version puts it: to the man in the street, as we might say. The men who produced that version were capable of writing far above the ordinary reader's head, as their preface testifies, but they had the good sense to follow Tyndale as to about nine-tenths of his translation, and Tyndale was a master of terse and telling English. Perhaps they deviated from him too much, but at least they avoided the stilted latinized style that had characterized some previous English versions, where, for example, we may read: "But he exinanited himself, taking the form of a servant"; "Give us to-day our supersubstantial bread"; "Prepare your prepromised beneficence that it might be ready as a beneficence and not as an extortion" (2 Cor. ix. 5). Luther, like Tyndale, believed it was possible to put the Scriptures into the homely speech of the common people. "I have tried to talk German, not Latin and Greek," he replied to those who blamed him. "You must not get your German from the Latin as those asses do," he

said again, " but you must get it from the mother in the home, the child in the street, the common man in the market-place." He succeeded in making the Bible really a German book, as Tyndale made it an English book.

A literary dialect may be so artificial as to resemble a foreign tongue to unlettered folk. The Chinese classics are preserved in an ancient form of language, and all Chinese who aspired to high culture under the old regime learnt to write in the same way, the natural consequence being that the common people were left ignorant. When the Bible was first translated into Chinese it was this literary dialect, *wenli*, as it is called, that was used ; but when, to the great horror of the scholars, another translation was made into the vulgar tongue, it was then that the Bible began to be what it is, one of the best known and most widely read books in China.

In the nature of the case, the Scriptures cannot be written in words of one syllable. St Paul was not easily understood, even by some of his contemporaries, and we still need commentaries on his epistles. But the common people heard Jesus gladly. His words can be made intelligible to the common folk of every land ; and for the rest, we must strive to make the version as intelligible as the case allows.

This simplicity of language is essential if the translation is to be, as it should be, beautiful. How far is the influence of the Bible over the English people due to its magic beauty ? The human mind craves for beauty, as the body craves for food ; if men fail to achieve the beautiful, beauty rarely fails to appeal to

them. Truth embodied in lovely form enters and pleases our minds, it woos us, enchants us, gains power over us. The æsthetic influence of the English Bible is incalculable. An ear trained to its rhythm and cadences cannot be destitute of artistic taste or insensible to the music of language. Its words linger in our ears and hearts. And the translator into other tongues should use every effort to make his version beautiful, by the selection of his words and their arrangement into sentences. And yet it is not so much a matter of making an effort. A great literary style is not a matter of the will ; you must feel deeply the truth of what you are writing if you are to write nobly.

Because good translation is not a mechanical affair, the spirit of the translator weighs most, after all. To render St Paul, says Dr Glover, you want St Paul's experience of Christ.

To achieve at once fidelity, intelligibility, and beauty may be impossible. These elements come sometimes into conflict and then compromise is necessary. The first requirement of a translation into English, says Dr Jowett, is that it be English ; and the first requirement of a translation into Zulu, we may add, is that it be Zulu. Others would say that at whatever cost to beauty and intelligibility the translation must be absolutely faithful. If the one is inconsistent with the other, which is to prevail ?

It is not possible always to be true to the letter of Scripture if we wish to be understood. For one thing, the traditional text of the Old Testament is often very obscure, and very corrupt—" desperately corrupt,"

says Dr Moffatt. In his version he is content to leave three dots (. . .) where it is impossible to ascertain the meaning. Our English version, however, puts in what the translators thought (not perhaps without good reason) the passage meant. If we follow this precedent, we go beyond our demand for fidelity; if we follow Dr Moffatt, we may make the passage meaningless.

Fidelity to the text might seem to involve rendering it word for word, but such transverbation falls short of translation in the highest sense; it will probably be the reverse of beautiful, even if possible, and generally it is not possible. The beginner in Greek can test the possibility for himself if he will compare the first verse of St John's Gospel in Latin and Greek. St Jerome strove in his Vulgate after a literal rendering and, helped by the close kinship of the two languages, became nearer to success in that direction than perhaps any other translator. But the literalness is not absolute, as we shall see at once if we write the verse from St John in Greek with the Latin words underneath. Word for word the two versions correspond, with the exception that Latin has no article. The article is very important. Our notion of literalness fails at once. In other languages the order of the words in a sentence is so entirely different from the Greek that to follow the text as St Jerome did is quite out of the question, if we wish to be intelligible. The translator must emancipate himself from the bondage of a soulless literalism. Some people imagine that one Greek word should always be translated by one and the same word in another tongue. It is not

possible to find an exact equivalent in English for every Greek term ; as we insisted in a previous paragraph, words in one language hardly ever correspond entirely to words in another ; and various words may have to be used to bring out in different contexts the meaning of the original. The Greek word *ethne* is rightly rendered " Gentiles " in some passages, but " pagans " or " nations " in others. The Rev. H. E. Maddox, who translated the Scriptures into the Lunyoro language of the Uganda Protectorate, speaks of the impossibility of always translating uniformly. " Take the word ' carry,' " he says ; " you may carry a box, or you may carry a sick man ; but if you used for the sick man the same word that you have used for the box, you would suggest that you were trying to balance him on the top of your head." Mr Maddox gives an excellent example of the truth that real fidelity to the meaning often involves abandonment of literal fidelity.

When St Peter was asked, " Doth not your Master pay tribute ? " he answered, " Yes " ; but if in the language of Bunyoro we were to translate " yes " by the equivalent for " yes," the meaning conveyed to a Native would be, " Yes, He does not," because the word affirms whatever has gone before, including the negative.

In this case the Greek " yes " must be rendered " no " in order to keep the meaning of the original. We are to translate ideas rather than words.

It is in the rendering of idioms, metaphors, and similes that the principles of fidelity and intelligibility come most frequently into collision. Some languages, compared with others, are prosaic—the people do not

employ figures of speech so largely as others. Where metaphors and similes are freely used, they are not always interchangeable between one people and another. What one uses, another will fail to understand, because the object named is not known. How is the translator to deal with this? Shall he translate the terms exactly as he finds them, at the risk of being not understood, or misunderstood? But if the object named in the simile is unknown to the people, they have no word for it; he must therefore introduce a word and explain it. The alternative is to change the terms of a simile. To say "his head and his hair were . . . white as snow" is to use a simile that can only be directly understood by people who have seen snow. For the Ba-ila who have never seen it, we translated, "white as *lukobo*," lukobo being a flock of white egrets that, as the sun is westering, may be seen clustered upon a tree, and glistening like a mound of snow. This is a legitimate departure, I think, from literal fidelity, because the impression of great whiteness given to the Ba-ila by the *lukobo* is similar or identical with the impression made on our minds by snow; snow to us, and *lukobo* to them, is the whitest thing on earth.

In the verse, "I will make you fishers of men," the meaning should be readily grasped, we imagine, by any persons who fish. But the Rev. Herman Kraft, who translated St Mark for the Natives of Manus Island, found that they could not understand the simile. "When a fisher goes away from fish, he is no longer a fisher," they argued. "Fisher of men!" said Mr Kraft's cook. "Oh, for eating them afterwards!" This is the aspect of the matter that would

appeal to cannibals. In such a case, some other simile might be employed, but seeing the close connection in thought between the disciples as fishermen and the disciples as apostles, it would be better to retain "fishers of men" and keep on explaining it till it was understood and had become part of the language.

Such instances differ, of course, from those in which an object not known to the people is mentioned in plain straightforward speech. Mr Maddox quotes the verse: "The fir tree is a dwelling for the stork"; this is not a simile. There are no fir trees in Uganda. Shall the translator choose a tree which is like a fir? The stork will not live in it. The only way, unless the Greek or English word is used, is to choose a tree where the stork does live, whether it is like a fir tree or not. This I think to be legitimate, for the true impression is given to the readers.

Idiom is a frequent source of perplexity. We all know what it means, though it is not easy to explain in a few words. When we speak of idiomatic translation, we mean one that employs familiar turns of speech, expressions that come naturally to the lips of folk in their homely conversation. Idioms present difficulty because they vary from language to language—like metaphors and similes, which indeed are often idiomatic. "It's blowing great guns" is an English idiom. To translate it literally into French would convey no sense. It must be rendered by some such phrase as "Il fait un vent à décorner les bœufs"—an equivalent French idiom. A translator is continually watching for such idioms in order to bring them into his version of Scripture. He frequently asks, "How do you say

this ? " explaining the idea he has in mind. Sometimes he gets curious answers. A missionary in New Guinea wanted the proper idiom for " far be it from me to do this thing." " I understand exactly," said the catechumen whom he consulted. " We have the precise idiom ; we say, ' May I speak to my mother-in-law before I will do this thing ! ' " That idiom, I believe, did not appear in the translation.

The translator has many an anxious moment in deciding how far it is allowable, in the desire to produce an idiomatic, intelligible, beautiful version, to depart from strict literal accuracy. How far may he go to meet his people's sense of propriety ? Some people are more offended than others when a spade is called a spade. You may mention *suer* in French when you may be only euphemistic and say " perspire " in English. Just as there are ranks in society so are there ranks among words—the higher ranks being good dictionary words used in literature and polite society, while the lower are named " slang," and others are unmentionable in mixed assemblies. Africans have a keen sense of propriety in the use of words ; many a word that seems innocent enough to the foreigner, it may be the name of some common object, men will not use in the presence of women. They have many words which for various reasons are taboo. In Kele, a Congo language, the Parable of the Lost Sheep could not at one time be rendered in a version to be used by men and women alike, because of a taboo which interfered with the Kele equivalent for " ninety-nine." When making the Ila version I had continually to be on the watch lest some word

might creep in that would cause offence ; and it was often difficult to know what to do when the word in question seemed to be the only one capable of use.

But I have said enough. I have not tried to exhaust the translator's trials. When to what I have written you add all the perplexities arising from the use of tenses and moods and other things, you will begin to understand what Luther meant when he wrote to his friend Wenceslaus Link : " How great and laborious a task it is to force Hebrew writers to talk German ! How they strive against it and rebel at being compelled to forsake their native manner and follow the rough German style ! " And how much greater and more laborious a task it is to get the evangelists and apostles to talk a hitherto unwritten tongue ! We rightly admire a scholar like Dr James Moffatt who, single-handed, translates the whole Bible into modern English ; how much more ought we to admire a man who goes out to some outlandish spot, learns the language from the lips of the people, and then perhaps after thirty, or even forty, years of toil gives them the whole Bible in their mother-tongue ! He has his reward when his people read it and say, " Yes, this is our language," and find God there.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPREAD OF THE BIBLE IN THE WORLD

I

The Rev. T. H. Darlow used to delight in dwelling upon the fact that the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society moves along the central tide of Christian history and can claim sanction and warrant from the undivided Church. "Bible translation, indeed, did not wait for the formal decree of any Council; it had its birth in the deep, spontaneous Christian instinct that every man must learn the Gospel in his own tongue."

But translation began before the Christian Church came into being. Tradition relates that in the third century B.C. the keeper of the famous library at Alexandria, in Egypt, proposed to his king that the Jewish Book of the Law should be translated into Greek. The king consented and secured seventy-two learned men from Palestine who in seventy-two days accomplished the work. This story is no doubt spurious, but it is certain that a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was made in Egypt. It was not done in seventy-two days; the last book did not see the light till the second century A.D. In memory of the seventy (or rather, seventy-two) traditional translators it received the name "Septuagint." This was the first translation on any large scale of an ancient book from one language into another; it is the most famous and most influential version of

Scripture. The Hebrew tongue of earlier days was no longer in common use. The thousands of Jews scattered over the Roman Empire spoke Greek as their mother-tongue, and the Septuagint became their Bible. It formed a link between the Hebraic and Hellenistic cultures. Greek was also very largely the language of Palestine ; St Paul and the other apostles spoke it, and the Greek Bible was theirs ; they read it and quoted from it. It was of very great service in the spread of Christianity, and became the Bible of the early Christian Church and the basis of many early translations.

Our Lord wrote no book. He spoke, as a rule if not entirely, the Aramaic of His native land, and when after His death the evangelists wrote the Gospels they rendered His words into Greek. St Paul and the other writers, whose letters and treatises came with the Gospels to be our New Testament, needed no translation at first, for they wrote in Greek and Christians understood it.

Not for centuries was it thought that the Scriptures should be kept from the laity. Throughout the early era of the history of the Church the Christians were encouraged to read them for themselves. We may imagine that where a congregation could not understand Greek the lessons were interpreted by word of mouth. But as the Church expanded and the use of Greek declined, translations became necessary and began to appear. They appeared gradually, as they have appeared all through the subsequent centuries : first, perhaps, extracts, then a complete Gospel, later the New Testament, and finally the whole Bible.

The first translation seems to have been made into Syriac, a form of speech very closely allied with the Aramaic spoken by our Lord. Some scholars would date it A.D. 150. Later editions in Syriac were carried by Nestorian missionaries to India and even to China.

By the year 250 a version of the Bible in Latin was in use at Carthage, the centre of Christianity in North Africa ; it may have been made there or in Italy ; and evidently it spread through many of the western provinces of the Roman Empire. The first Bible seen in Great Britain probably came from Africa. Copies were multiplied, of course by hand, and often so carelessly that with the passage of time nobody could be sure of the text. Then Pope Damasus commissioned a fine scholar, Jerome, to prepare a new and authoritative version of the New Testament in Latin. The four Gospels appeared in 383, and the rest of the Testament shortly afterwards. A few years later Jerome settled in Bethlehem and began to translate the Old Testament from the Hebrew into Latin. He knew the language well, and, what is more, had a first-hand acquaintance with the land and customs of Palestine. He spent about fifteen years at this task ; it was completed in 405. His version of the Bible, called the Vulgate, i.e. common or current, did not, however, come into general use till some centuries later, because the people clung (they always do) to the older version. It became the authorized version of the whole of Western Christendom during more than a thousand years ; it is still the official version of the Roman Catholic Church.

Meanwhile the Bible had penetrated farther into

Africa. Tradition ascribes to Frumentius, the Apostle of Ethiopia, a translation into Ethiopic in the fourth century; certainly a version, made mainly from the Greek, was completed before the seventh century.

Armenia was the first country to receive and acknowledge Christianity as its national religion. About the middle of the third century an infant named Gregory was saved when his whole family was slain by the orders of the king of Armenia; he was carried off to Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, where he was brought up as a Christian; he returned to be the apostle of his native land, and was consecrated its bishop in A.D. 300. Unlike many peoples of the Nearer East, the Armenians had not been Hellenized; they retained their own language. The Bible was given to them about the beginning of the fifth century by Mesrob. "There can be no doubt that the early possession of the Scriptures in the vernacular helped to enlighten and consolidate the Armenian Church and to fortify it for the trials it was called upon to endure."[1]

During the fifth and sixth centuries the New Testament was given to the people of Georgia, in the Caucasus. Both in Georgia and Armenia a new alphabet was made for the writing of the Scriptures, though the Armenians had a temple literature before their conversion.

Before this, the first translation of the Scriptures had been made for a people who previously possessed no alphabet, no literature. The Goths, who were of Teutonic stock, had swept eastwards from the forests of Germany until they invaded the Roman province of

[1] W. F. Adeney, *The Greek and Eastern Churches* (1908), p. 543.

Dacia, north of the Danube, which was afterwards ceded to them. They grew into a great power. Christianity probably reached them in the first instance through Christian captives carried off in the course of their raids. Ulphilas, who became the Apostle of the Goths, was born in A.D. 311. He learnt Greek and Latin in Constantinople, and at the age of thirty returned to evangelize his fellow-countrymen. He also translated the Bible for them—all but the Books of the Kings, says his biographer, "which he omitted because they are a mere narrative of military exploits, and the Gothic tribes were specially fond of war."

Another version which marked the beginning of a literature was the Slavonic, made in about 870 by two Greek missionaries, Cyril and Methodius, who worked among the Moravians and other Slavonic peoples. They adapted the Greek alphabet, adding other necessary signs. The version was carried into Russia, where it helped to further the spread of Christianity.

It is said that a translation of some part of Scripture was made in Arabic during the lifetime of Muhammad, and the knowledge of the Bible displayed by him has been ascribed, in part, to this fact. This version, if ever it existed, is no longer extant. In the eighth century, John, Bishop of Seville, executed a translation from Jerome's Vulgate into Arabic.

At the end of the seventh century, Cædmon, the cowherd of Whitby, paraphrased some parts of the Bible in an alliterative poem, and some years later Guthlac, a hermit of Crowland, translated the Psalter into Anglo-Saxon. The Venerable Bede, the monk of

Jarrow, made a version of St John's Gospel. But the English people had to wait another six hundred years before they received the whole Bible in their mother-speech. The earliest translation into German was made in the eighth century.

Some of the versions we have named remain, more or less in their ancient form; others have passed out of use; others again have been displaced by later and better translations.

II

By the end of the ninth century the first period of translation had closed. There appears to be no record of any version being made in a fresh language during the following two hundred years. Wherever Latin Christianity was established, the Vulgate was read in church and by educated people at home. Missionary zeal had waned. The rise of Islam had overthrown some Churches in Africa and the East and paralysed others.

Then in the twelfth century a new period began to dawn. It was marked by a nascent nationalism and a growing revolt against the corruptions of the Latin Church. French manuscripts of the Psalter and other parts of Scripture have survived from the beginning of this period; but the first French Bible did not appear till the end of the thirteenth century. Other versions were made in connection with the Waldensian and other religious movements in the south of France, and these strongly influenced the earliest attempts to put the Scriptures into Italian soon afterwards. The Latin Church resisted these tendencies, and, as at

the Council of Toulouse in 1229, prohibited the preparation and use of vernacular versions; but though it might check it could not stop the movement. Before the close of the fourteenth century Wyclif and his disciples had produced the first Bible in English, and about the same time John Huss (who died in 1415) revised the Bohemian Bible, some parts of which date back, it is claimed, to Cyril and Methodius.

The tide of the Renaissance was now flowing full. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 opened to the West the treasures of Greek learning, and the invention of printing about the same time provided the means of spreading it abroad. The Reformation which followed was marked above all things by a return to the Bible. At the time the printing-press began to be used the Scriptures, in whole or in part, had been rendered into no more than about a score of languages. Thereafter the progress of translation was rapid. The study of Hebrew revived. Erasmus issued his epoch-making text of the Greek New Testament in 1516; and the new versions were prepared from the original Hebrew and Greek.

The first large book printed in Europe was a Latin Bible—the so-called *Mazarin*. Ten years later the first German Bible appeared, the precursor of the fourteen editions which preceded Martin Luther's great translation of the whole Bible which appeared in 1534. This became at once the most widely read book in Germany, and, besides its tremendous religious effect, exerted a commanding influence on the development of the German language. It also gave an impetus to translation in other European countries. Within a little

more than a century the Bible was printed in Italian, French, Dutch, Catalan, Spanish, Polish, English, Swedish. By the end of the sixteenth century versions of the whole Bible, or part of it, appeared in Serbian, Hungarian, Icelandic, Yiddish, Welsh, Finnish, Slovenian, Rumanian, Lithuanian, Lettish, Russian. In the next century Irish and some minor languages of Europe were added to the list. With the exception of a few small countries, such as Bulgaria, Europe had now been given the Scriptures. The Latin Church had in general stood sternly and disapprovingly aside from this remarkable movement, but it was compelled to issue versions in some of the languages ; the Douay version in English, for example. It was not until the eighteenth century, when in 1757 Pope Benedict the Sixteenth gave a qualified permission for the reading of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, that Roman Catholic translations were issued in Italy, Spain, and Portugal.

III

We now reach the period when the Scriptures were to resume their march into countries beyond Europe. It was the privilege of the Dutch to take the initiative.

On the formation of the Dutch East India Company, some of its officials in the East began to interest themselves in the Malays. John van Hasel, a Director of the Company, translated St Matthew for them, and soon afterwards A. C. Ruyl did the same. The latter's version was printed in 1629 ; it is probably the earliest example in history of the translation and printing of a book of the Bible in a non-European language

as a means of evangelization. The Malay Testament was completed, and printed at the expense of the Dutch East India Company, in 1668. It is interesting to remember that in 1677 an edition of the Gospels in Malay was issued at the cost of the Corporation for the Propagating of the Gospel, the Governor of which was Robert Boyle, the famous English physicist and chemist who was one of the founders of the Royal Society.

This Corporation (afterwards named the New England Company) was founded by the Long Parliament at the instigation of Oliver Cromwell for the special purpose of missionary work in the colonies of North America. Its foundation was indirectly the fruit of the labours of a very remarkable man, John Eliot, who, after taking his degree at Cambridge in 1623, went out as a Presbyterian pastor to Massachusetts where, in addition to ministering to the colonists, he interested himself in the Indians. He learnt the language, reduced it to written form, and eventually completed a translation of the whole Bible, which was published in 1663. " Prayer and Pains, through Faith in Jesus Christ, will do anything," he said. The time came when the last of the Mohicans perished, the tribe became extinct, the language disused. But Eliot's Bible remains, though to-day nobody can read it, an imperishable monument ; it is the earliest example of the translation and printing of the entire Bible in a new language as a means of evangelization.

These two versions, Malay and Mohican, mark the opening of the modern missionary movement which was to carry the Scriptures to the ends of the earth.

The first missionaries to Southern India appear to have been Nestorian Christians, though tradition assigns the honour to St Thomas, the Apostle. The Nestorians did not, it seems, translate the Scriptures into the vernacular, but used their Syriac version. Francis Xavier, the Roman Catholic missionary, who arrived in India in 1541, never learnt the language, but preached through interpreters. "You can imagine the life I lead here," he wrote, "and what my sermons are like, when neither the people can understand the interpreter nor the interpreter the preacher—to wit, myself." He caused the Catechism to be translated, but no version of Scripture.

The honour of putting the Gospel first into a language of India belongs to the Dane, Bartholomaus Ziegenbalg, one of the first two Protestant missionaries to that country. His translation of the New Testament was printed in 1715, and by the time he died, at the age of thirty-six, he had got as far as the end of the Book of Judges in rendering the Old Testament. The Bible was completed by his colleague, B. Schultze, who also made a version of some books in Dakhini, the form of Urdu spoken by Muhammadans in Southern India.

A Dutch minister, Willem Konijn, made the first translation of the Gospels in Sinhalese, the language of Ceylon.

With the coming of William Carey, in 1793, the first British missionary to India, a new era began for Bible translation in that land. By the end of the eighteenth century he had made a version of the New Testament in Bengali—the first of the thirty-five

versions for which he became in some degree responsible. In his versatility and diligence as a translator, this Northampton cobbler has never been surpassed.

Before the close of the century another advance had been registered in a very different field.

Greenland, discovered by Norsemen in A.D. 986, became a Norwegian colony, but when Hans Egedé landed there in 1721 all trace of his fellow-countrymen had disappeared. The way in which he turned to the rude Eskimo, lived among them, mastered their most difficult language, is one of the romances of the mission field. He translated for them the Psalms and the Epistles of St Paul. His son Paul was born in Greenland and spoke the Eskimo tongue as a native. He was sent to Denmark to study at the University of Copenhagen ; on his return he compiled a dictionary and wrote a grammar, and completed the translation of the New Testament, which was published in 1766.

Having now in our survey reached the threshold of the nineteenth century, let us see where we stand and take a glance forward. Seventy-one versions of Scripture had been printed by this time. We may set them out as follows :

In the xvth century versions were printed in						14	languages.
,,	xvi	,,	,,	,,	,,	26	,,
,,	xvii	,,	,,	,,	,,	12	,,
,,	xviii	,,	,,	,,	,,	19	,,

By March 31st, 1929, the figure of 71 had grown to 886 ; that is to say, the Bible or some part of the Bible has been printed in 815 languages since the year 1801. Let us divide this period into decades :

From	1801 to 1810	there were	10	new versions.
,,	1811 to 1820	,,	34	,,
,,	1821 to 1830	,,	43	,,
,,	1831 to 1840	,,	31	,,
,,	1841 to 1850	,,	34	,,
,,	1851 to 1860	,,	76	,,
,,	1861 to 1870	,,	58	,,
,,	1871 to 1880	,,	43	,,
,,	1881 to 1890	,,	69	,,
,,	1891 to 1900	,,	98	,,
,,	1901 to 1910	,,	113	,,
,,	1911 to 1920	,,	113	,,
,,	1921 to 1929	(9 years),	93	,,

The enormous growth in the last hundred and twenty-eight years is due, of course, to the extension of the missionary enterprise of the Christian Church. It is also due in some measure to the fact that special societies have existed for the purpose of encouraging translation, of co-ordinating and in some degree directing the translators, and of publishing the result of their labours.

On the 7th of December 1802, a number of grave gentlemen were assembled in the counting-house of a London merchant, overlooking the Thames. It was a meeting of the committee of the Religious Tract Society. The Rev. Thomas Charles, of Bala, had come up to speak to them about the dearth of Bibles in Wales. In the course of discussion which followed his address a great thought was born in the mind of the Rev. Joseph Hughes, secretary of the Society, and found utterance in these words: "Surely a society might be formed for the purpose; and if for Wales, why not for the kingdom; why not for the

whole world ? " That was the beginning of the British and Foreign Bible Society which took shape and began work in 1804. Other societies were founded subsequently, of which the principal are : the Netherlands Bible Society (1814) ; the American Bible Society (1816) ; and the National Bible Society of Scotland, formed by the incorporation of other societies, in 1861.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has been responsible for the publication, or for the circulation, of six hundred and eighteen of the versions enumerated. These are not all complete Bibles, but are divided thus : complete Bibles, a hundred and forty-six ; complete New Testaments, a hundred and forty-nine ; smaller integral parts of the Bible, three hundred and twenty-three. Some few of these are now obsolete. In the past twenty years this society has issued a version in some fresh language every five weeks.

A certain number of the other versions has been issued at one time or another for philological purposes, that is to say, as a record of the languages. About a hundred of the total are only selections or extracts, and not complete books of Scripture. Translations of the entire Bible number a hundred and seventy-one, and of the entire New Testament a hundred and sixty-seven.

IV

How am I to present to my readers any detailed account of the making of all these versions—any adequate characterization of the men and women who have made them ? To do this would need a large book. To condense it all into a few paragraphs would

simply mean writing an unprofitable catalogue of names and dates. The only thing possible is to review briefly several areas in succession and mention a few of the outstanding translators. In view of what I have written in previous chapters it will not be necessary to insist upon the difficulties of the task, nor to describe the process of working. All I ask is that readers bear continually in mind that the great majority of the translations were made for peoples who previously possessed no literature, no alphabet.

The first book published by the British and Foreign Bible Society soon after its foundation in 1804 was the Gospel of St John in the language of the Mohawk Indians of North America. The translation was made by a Cherokee Indian, naturalized in infancy among the Mohawks and speaking their language as his own. He knew English, having been an interpreter in the British Army, in which, indeed, he held a captain's commission. He translated from English. Two other books were afterwards printed in this language ; they are no longer in use.

I have already described [1] how James Evans, the Wesleyan missionary, invented a syllabic script for the Cree Indians who inhabit the inhospitable regions of Hudson Bay—the people who figure in Fenimore Cooper's romances. In one of their dialects the whole Bible, printed in the syllabic characters, was translated, mainly by an Anglican clergyman, William Mason, who laboured for thirty years among the tribe. It was revised by Bishop Horden, who spent forty apostolic years in the country ; and afterwards was

[1] See pp. 110–11.

revised again by another remarkable man, Archdeacon Mackay, who lived among the Crees for fifty years, and from boyhood was familiar with the language. This Bible is still constantly in use by the Crees, most of whom are Christians. Versions of some part of Scripture have been made in at least twenty of the Indian languages of North America.

I have written of the Eskimo version made in Greenland. When, in 1771, Moravian missionaries braved the stormy waters and landed in Labrador among the Eskimo of that land, who were then totally savage and uncultured people, they hoped to be able to use the Greenland version. They found, however, that the dialect was so very different that they had to make a new translation. To-day the bleak and terrible coast of Labrador is peopled by a Christian race, who read and appreciate the Bible in their own tongue. This Eskimo version was begun early in the nineteenth century, the Gospel of St John being printed in 1810. Touching pictures are drawn of the people reading the little books in their tents and snow-houses and taking them off to the islands when they went hunting and fishing. The Bible was completed in 1871.

None of the Central American or South American Indians have ever yet received the whole Bible, but three of the tribes have the New Testament, and some parts of Scripture have been put into fifteen other dialects.

From South America we pass to the islands of the Southern Seas. Tahiti, one of the Society group of islands, was the first to receive missionaries, the

pioneers of the London Missionary Society arriving there in 1797, and the language was the first of Polynesian languages into which the whole Bible was translated. The first book was a primer printed in England, the second was a spelling-book printed on a small press taken out in 1817 by William Ellis. The first sheets were struck off with his own hand by the king. The first Gospel, St Luke's, was printed in the following year on the same press. The translator, Henry Nott, had spent twenty years in studying the language; then he spent twenty more in translating the Bible, which, with some help from his colleagues, he completed in 1838.

The Scriptures have spread widely into the languages of Oceania, there being now no fewer than ninety versions. These include fourteeen complete Bibles and twenty complete New Testaments. The Bibles are for the Maoris of New Zealand, the Fijians, the Samoans, the peoples of Rarotonga, Niue, Hawai, and other islands. It is a great story—if only it could be told—of how these translations have been made and the influence they have had upon peoples who were largely cannibal when the missionaries first went among them.

We come now to China, for whose four hundred million people translations in no fewer than thirty dialects and forms of speech have been made.

The Jesuits, who began their missionary work in China in the sixteenth century, were the first, it seems, to translate parts of the Bible into Chinese. We related in Chapter I how Robert Morrison before leaving England copied in the British Museum a

manuscript containing much of the New Testament written by Roman Catholic missionaries. It is doubtful how much of these early renderings was ever printed and circulated.

Morrison landed at Canton in China on 7th September 1808. He went with the express intention of mastering Chinese and of making a translation of the Bible. The difficulties that faced him were such that they seem incredible to us to-day. China was practically closed to the outside world. The merchants, suffered to trade in the ports, were denied entrance farther into the country. It was a capital offence for a Chinese to teach the language to a foreigner. Morrison persuaded two men, who were Roman Catholics, to teach him, but they were in such terror of the consequences that they carried poison on their persons, so that if arrested they might escape the horrors of prison and execution. Morrison could only gain a foothold by entering the service of the East India Company. He stealthily collected Chinese books—in a short time he had over a thousand ; and in secret he worked on preparing his dictionary and making his translation.

Meanwhile Joshua Marshman, a colleague of Carey, was studying Chinese in India, and he supervised a translation of two of the Gospels made by John Lassar, an Armenian born in China. These were published in 1810, the same year that Morrison's version of Acts was printed. The two translations proceeded simultaneously. Marshman and Lassar won the race and produced the whole Bible in 1822 ; Morrison, who in the later stages of his work was

assisted by William Milne, a colleague sent out by the London Missionary Society, followed with his the next year. No doubt the latter was the better translation. Morrison accomplished a tremendous feat. His dictionary has been superseded ; his version has given place to later and better ones ; but his work lives on ; the day his version appeared must always be a historic day for China.

It would take too much space to narrate the subsequent history of translation in China. But we must dwell for a moment upon the work of another great translator, Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky. Born of Jewish parents in Lithuania, in the year 1831, he was turned towards Christianity by reading a Hebrew Testament translated by Black Jews in India, a copy of which in some strange way had found its way into his home. At eighteen he was writing poetry in Hebrew. In 1854 he went to the United States, where he entered a theological seminary in New York. On graduation he was offered a professorship, but he refused it, saying : "I want to go to China to translate the Bible." He learnt Chinese so rapidly that when he arrived in China he astonished the native teachers by being able to write good classical composition. For almost fifty years (he arrived in China in 1859 and died in 1908) he devoted himself to translation—even after being consecrated as Bishop. Morrison had adopted the high Wenli, or classical style, for his version, and other translators had followed his example. In 1861 Schereschewsky (he was irreverently named by colleagues "Old Sherry and Whisky") began with others to translate the New Testament into the

colloquial speech, the so-called Mandarin ; and he followed this with a translation of the whole Old Testament by himself. Hebrew being familiar to him from childhood, he was eminently fitted for this task. This completed, he began a translation into what is called "easy Wenli," "the literary language, plain style." By 1902 he completed the whole Bible. The rest of his life was spent in carefully revising these versions. But long before the work was done the Bishop was stricken with paralysis. We can imagine the heroic scholar as he pursues his toil. No longer can he hold a pen, so he gets a typewriter. One by one his fingers refuse to act, till only the middle finger of each hand responds ; but lying on his couch he goes patiently on—tap, tap, tap, and every tap a pain. This is his record : "He wrote the entire text of his Wenli Bible and the notes for his revision of the Mandarin Old Testament in the Roman letter on a typewriter, using only the middle finger of each hand. He often facetiously refers to this easy Wenli as a 'Two-Finger Bible.'" [1]

So throughout Asia, from Singapore and the islands of the East Indian Archipelago, to the dreary plains of Siberia in the north ; from Japan through to Asia Minor, the Scriptures have found their way into the tongues of numerous peoples. No fewer than a hundred and ninety versions have been made for Asiatic peoples ; and these include the entire Bible in fifty-three forms of speech, and the New Testament in forty-seven others.

[1] H. O. Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society* (1916), p. 499. The Bishop's typescript was, of course, re-written for him in Chinese characters.

Africa has figured largely in the history of Bible translation. The Septuagint had its birth in Egypt; the Gospels in Coptic were in use in the second century; the earliest Latin version was probably made in Africa, the Abyssinians had the Ethiopic version in the fourth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the only addition to this list (except Arabic which, of course, is not an African language—any more than Greek and Latin—but is widely spoken in the north) was Fanti, a language of the Gold Coast, and in this only a few fragments of the Bible had been printed in a grammar written by an African. The first African version published by the British and Foreign Bible Society was St Matthew's Gospel in the Bullom language of Sierra Leone, translated by the Anglican missionary, G. R. Nylander. This was printed in 1816. Since then an enormous development has taken place. Scores of languages, the very existence of which was unsuspected in the year of Waterloo, have been discovered and reduced to written form. Now no fewer than two hundred and sixty versions exist in languages spoken in Africa, and these include the entire Bible in twenty-eight, and the New Testament in fifty-nine others. As I write, the names of many of the translators flit through my mind: Crowther, Parker, Johnson (Africans), Moffat, Mackay, Pilkington, Maddox, Krapf, Mabille, Christaller, Bentley, and so on.

The Historical Catalogue of Printed Bibles contains the names of upwards of five thousand men and women who have translated, revised, or edited versions of Scripture. They are of many nationalities, of various

communions, of various degrees of culture. Not all by any means are missionaries—the names of many government officials appear on the list. But they were united in their love of the Bible and in their determination to give it, in as perfect a form as they were able, to the peoples of the world. Their labours have gone far towards making it the common possession of mankind ; perhaps three-fifths of the inhabitants of the globe now have some part of the Bible, if not the whole of it, in their mother-tongue. The translations begin, perhaps, with the Lord's Prayer, one or two Parables, or the Commandments, in a spelling-book ; but they grow eventually in many cases into a complete Bible. They are revised, re-revised, revised again, until possibly much of the original translator's work has disappeared. But in the course of years they grow ever more faithful, clearer, more beautiful. The great majority of modern versions have been made by foreigners ; but in an ever-increasing degree, the Christian Natives, as their religious experience deepens and their scholarship broadens, take their share in the work. The time will come when Chinese and Indians and Africans and others, uniting a natural knowledge of their native speech with an acquired knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, will give their fellow-countrymen greater versions still.

What a record it is ! " I cannot help thinking," says Dr T. R. Glover, " that it represents one of the greatest masses of real literary work our race has done."

" What is the final reason and motive for translating the Bible ? " asks T. H. Darlow. " It really depends

on this profound conviction—that to know Jesus Christ as He lived on earth, and to read men's actual experiences of Him, must always be supremely important in the Christian life. His Name shall be called Wonderful; and it grows more and more wonderful as often as a fresh tongue spoken by some savage tribe learns to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

CHAPTER IX

THE MIRACLE OF BOOKS

I

A WELL-KNOWN story told by John Williams, one of the pioneers of the London Missionary Society in the South Seas, will bear repetition here as an introduction to this chapter.

He was building a chapel on the island of Rarotonga not long after his arrival.

As I had come to the work one morning without my square, I took up a chip, and with a piece of charcoal wrote upon it a request that Mrs Williams would send me that article. I called a chief, who was superintending his portion of the work, and said to him, "Friend, take this; go to our house and give it to Mrs Williams." He was a singular-looking man, remarkably quick in his movements, and had been a great warrior; but in one of the numerous battles he had fought he had lost an eye. Giving me an inexpressible look with the other, he said, "Take that! she will call me a fool and scold me, if I carry a chip to her." "No," I replied, "she will not: take it and go immediately; I am in haste." Perceiving me to be in earnest, he took it and asked, "What must I say?" I replied, "You have nothing to say, the chip will say all I wish." With a look of astonishment and contempt, he held up the piece of wood and said, "How can this speak? has this a mouth?" I desired him to take it immediately, and not spend so much time in talking about it. On arriving at the house, he gave

the chip to Mrs Williams, who read it, threw it away, and went to the tool-chest; whither the chief, resolving to see the result of this mysterious proceeding, followed her closely. On receiving the square from her, he said, "Stay, daughter, how do you know that this is what Mr Williams wants?" "Why," she replied, "did you not bring me a chip just now?" "Yes," said the astonished warrior, "but I did not hear it say anything." "If you did not, I did," was the reply, "for it made known to me what he wanted, and all you have to do is to return with it as quickly as possible." With this the chief leaped out of the house; and, catching up the mysterious piece of wood, he ran through the settlement with the chip in one hand and the square in the other, holding them as high as his arms would reach, and shouting as he went, "See the wisdom of these English people; they can make chips talk, they can make chips talk!" On giving me the square, he wished to know how it was possible thus to converse with persons at a distance. I gave him all the explanation in my power; but it was a circumstance involved in so much mystery, that he actually tied a string to the chip, hung it round his neck, and wore it for some time. During several following days, we frequently saw him surrounded by a crowd, who were listening with intense interest while he narrated the wonders which this chip had performed." [1]

J. G. Paton records an identical experience from his life on the island of Aniwa. I had one like it in Central Africa, and other pioneer missionaries could tell similar stories.

It is in this way that white men gain the reputation among barbarous people of being sorcerers.

[1] John Williams, *Missionary Enterprises*, p. 101.

II

Many barbarous peoples, who have no system of writing in the proper sense of the term, know how to express some of their ideas by etching designs on ivory and bone, as the Eskimo do. They frequently employ means of communicating with persons at a distance ; they have conventional or self-explanatory codes for this purpose. In the hills of Assam a challenge to personal combat may be sent to a man in the form of a splinter of wood thrust into a chilli. A declaration of war in the shape of a piece of charred wood (signifying one result of war, a burnt village) may be handed on from village to village until it reaches the people for whom it is intended. A green bough will signify a request for an armistice. Two sticks placed crosswise or a handful of grass thrown across a path declare it to be closed, or give loiterers warning not to take it but to keep straight on. The facial and other cicatrices which savages frequently make upon themselves are a form of writing, a kind of passport declaring the tribe to which they belong.

But these signs fall short of a system of calligraphy. Nothing so clearly marks the division between barbarism and civilization as the existence or absence of writing. When savages first encounter this method of conveying messages, it is no wonder that, like John Williams's one-eyed friend, they are amazed and incredulous. A book or letter is an uncanny thing to them. It is not every one who would dare to tie it round his neck.

Savages, and not savages alone, have great faith in

" medicine," amulets, and talismans, all of which are the vehicle which conveys the mystical energies which we dub " magic." They are quite convinced that these energies can be employed either to harm, or to protect from evil. They regard writing and books as the white man's magic, that which confers upon him his uncanny wisdom. They fear this at first, and then they long to possess it. When the missionary offers to unfold for them the treasures of his book and assures them that it contains God's message to mankind, they are afraid. Afterwards, when they have become accustomed to him, they will beg him to give them " medicine " to bathe their eyes so that they too may read. That skill in deciphering the book can only be gained by the drudgery of learning the ABC they cannot understand. The whole thing is magic to them, and reading a magic art. They come to know better, of course ; but even when they have learnt to read and write they do not cease to wonder at books. And as I lift my eyes from the paper on which I am writing and look round on the books in my library—garnered wisdom of the centuries—and reflect upon the marvel that a few signs imprinted in black upon white paper reveal to me the mind of a Shakespeare, a Virgil, an Isaiah, who wrote or spoke centuries ago, I am inclined to share the savage's wonder at the miracle of books.

The African at least is not surprised to be told that God can speak to a man through a book. It seems perfectly natural to him, for he too employs material objects to ascertain the will of his gods. He feels acutely the need of possessing some external authority

to enlighten and direct him. He believes implicitly in unseen beings, and to discover the means by which they shall speak to him has been one of the major preoccupations of his mind. It is for this reason that processes of divination play such a large part in the African's life.

The Ba-thonga of Mozambique have adopted a highly elaborate system of divination by means of the huckle-bones of goats and sheep and other animals. Each bone represents a person or one of the elements constituting their ordinary life, and according to the way these bones fall when thrown on a mat a revelation is given which will help them to make a decision. The divinatory bones are, then, a special variety of charm, or vehicle of mystic energies. And when the barbarian first comes into touch with books he ascribes to them the qualities that he believes to be possessed by his charms: they protect, confer virtues, work harm in the hands of an ill-wisher, and reveal the future.

The system of belief found among Africans and many other peoples in the same stage of culture is rightly, in some of its aspects, named Dynamism; and the difference between Dynamism and Religion, in the true sense of the term, is the difference between a charm and a book. What a charm is to Dynamism, the Bible is to Christianity: its typical instrument. Once obtain your charm and go through the proper ritual, and the mystic energies will produce the effect—will protect, will harm, will reveal—without the co-operation of your will. A book does not act thus. You have to learn to read it by an effort of the will,

you reflect upon the truth it contains, you make it part of your being; it rebukes, it instructs, it inspires; it does not act upon you from without as a charm does.

The distinction is a very real one to ourselves, but it is not so apparent to an unreflective mind which sees results and not processes. The savage observes that the white man gains knowledge and wisdom by means of books; he sees later that some of his fellows who read books become changed characters; and thinking always in terms of Dynamism he ascribes these things to the white man's charms—books, to wit. A well-known incident related by Robert Moffat well illustrates this point.

Some time after the Gospel had been preached among the Bechuana [says Moffat], I met an elderly man who looked very downcast. I said to him, "My friend, what is the matter, who is dead?" "Oh," said he, "there is no one dead." "Well, what is the matter? You seem to be in mourning." The man then scratched his head and said, "My son tells me that my dog has eaten a leaf of the Bible." "Well, what of that?" I said; "perhaps I can replace it." "Oh," says the man, "the dog will never do any good; he will never bite anybody, he will never catch any jackals, he will be as tame as I see the people become who believe in that book. All our warriors become as gentle as women, and my dog is done for." [1]

The old man evidently looked upon the Bible as a potent charm that would spoil his dog even as it had emasculated the warriors.

We cannot be surprised if people whose forbears and themselves have been reared in the atmosphere of

[1] E. W. Smith, *Robert Moffat* (1925), pp. 189–90.

Dynamism, and who then become Christians, carry over with them many of the old inbred ideas. Progress in religion involves sloughing off outworn creeds, but until the highest stage is reached "magic" and "religion" intermingle.

But we must not exaggerate. We must not think that the majority of African and other Christians regard the Bible as a charm. I have consulted several missionaries of long experience and they assure me that they do not know of instances among their people of the Bible being used as a magical instrument. Native Christians of the first generation do leap from a magical to a religious view of the Scriptures. And the process of their thought has been well described by an African Christian whose speech was reported by Robert Moffat. This man lifted a New Testament in his hand and spoke thus to the people :

> What did we think of this book before we were taught to read ? We imagined it to be a charm of the white people to keep off sickness ; a *thing* only, like other things, or that it was a trap to catch us. We had never heard of such a thing . . . but now we not only hear with our ears, we see with our eyes, we read it, our children read it. . . . We thought it was a thing to be spoken to, but now we know it has a tongue. It speaks and will speak to the whole world.[1]

If immature Christians in Africa and elsewhere were more crude than they are in their treatment of the Bible, we could not blame them unduly while we recall the misuse of the Bible in our own and other lands that have been nominally Christian for centuries. The

[1] E. W. Smith, *Robert Moffat*, pp. 188–9.

Greeks and Romans practised divination. They consulted the Sibyl (first cousin of the African bone-thrower) whose writings were looked upon as providing superhuman answers to all kinds of questions. People in pagan Rome used to open Virgil's *Æneid* and take as an oracle the first line that caught their eye, or they would close their eyes and prick the text with a pin. Such superstitions lingered on among Christians—they survive to our own day. The Bible has been treated like the *Æneid* : the *sortes Virgiliana* became *sortes Biblicæ*. Certain verses of the Bible have been regarded as powerful charms against certain diseases. The first chapter of the Gospel of St John was especially potent in all sorts of trouble. The ulceration of the mouth in children—" thrush," mothers call it—could be cured by repeating the eighth Psalm three times over the child. The efficacy of this passage was due to the words of the second verse : " Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings."

In what respect are such superstitions different from the practices of African savages ? And how often is the Bible even to-day treated as the Ba-thonga treat their divining bones—consulted and studied to find out the future ?

Dr J. H. Jowett, in one of his sermons, spoke of the Bible in many English homes, lying on the table in the window, covered with a lace antimacassar ; never disturbed, yet its owners would no more think of removing it than the farmer would think of taking down the horseshoe from his barn door. A domestic fetish, in fact. " I know of young girls," said Dr Jowett, " who have sewn the New Testament into their

skirts, so that they may never part with it." In the same way, men have carried it in their pockets—to save them from bullets. This is to use the Bible as a charm.

It is not in this way that the Bible was intended to do its work in the world.

III

Missionaries have held, and taught, different doctrines of the inerrant inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Some of them claim more for the Bible than the Bible claims for itself. The effect of such teaching has often proved unfortunate, not to say disastrous. There is so much in the Bible, especially in its early pages, that reflects the life of the more primitive peoples of to-day that men who wish to retain their pagan customs can find support there, if the Bible is interpreted in this way. The missionary seeking to lead his converts into the Christian view of marriage has Old Testament examples of polygamy quoted to him. He is asked : " If Abraham and others approved by God could have more than one wife, why cannot we?" Does the Bible anywhere prohibit polygamy ? African sects exist to-day on the basis of polygamy and they justify themselves by citing the Scriptures ; just as traffickers in human flesh and blood justified slavery in the same way. The verse in Exodus, " Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," is held, as being the Word of God, to support the old cruel practice of smelling-out sorcerers and throwing them to the crocodiles. Divination and many other customs can also be justified

from isolated texts of Scripture, if these are taken as the unalterable Word of God.

In the Luganda version of the Bible the word "charmer" or "wizard" was correctly, I believe, rendered by *basawo*; Deuteronomy xviii. 11 reads: "There shall not be found with thee . . . an enchanter, or a *basawo*. . . ." Unfortunately when medical missionaries arrived in Uganda they were also called *basawo*, and with the Bible in their hand it was easy for some of the native Christians to prove that the practice of medicine was prohibited by the Word of God. A leading Christian chief named Malaki actually founded a sect on this basis and baptized people on their promise not to touch medicine.[1]

Such incidents are not rare in Church history, and they are being repeated on the mission field in our own day. The remedy against such heresies is not to deny the Scriptures, or any part of the Scriptures, to the people; this would be to repeat the calamitous error of the Roman Church against which we ourselves have revolted; but to teach the true doctrine that the Bible contains a record of a progressive revelation of God to mankind, and that everything in it is to be judged by the standards given to us by Jesus Christ. I know from my own experience that such a doctrine is readily understood by Africans, and that, so far from detracting from the value they attach to the Bible, it removes difficulties which they feel and makes the Bible more real, more impressive, than ever.

Translators naturally begin by putting the Gospels into the language of their people, for to know the

[1] G. A. Gollock, *Sons of Africa* (1928), pp. 204 *sqq.*

life and teaching of our Lord is of supreme importance. They follow these up by translating the Acts and the Epistles. It might seem that the latter must be too difficult both to translate and to understand; but, while they are admittedly difficult to translate, there is so much in them that is applicable to the life of the infant Church of to-day that large sections of them are readily understood and appreciated. The translator next, as a rule, proceeds to give his people the Psalms, and if the people have been taught correctly there is no reason why he should omit even the imprecatory passages. As to the rest of the Old Testament, opinions differ. Some missionaries would stop at the New Testament and the Psalms; the most they would admit is that a selected, and edited, paraphrase of Old Testament stories should be made—the old stories that have a universal appeal. For myself I should agree with this procedure in the early days of the native Church. It would be foolish in the extreme for a translator to begin with Genesis and work his way steadily through the Bible, printing and giving to the people each book when completed. This would be postponing the most vital parts of the Bible to a late period. Begin with the Gospels most certainly and let these thoroughly soak into the hearts of the people before they read verbatim versions of Genesis and Judges and the rest. But permanently to deprive the Christians of the whole of the Old Testament, other than the Psalms, would be to inflict upon them a very great loss; for, after all, the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old. If they are taught as they should be taught, the very fact

that so much of the Old Testament reflects their own life is a tremendous help towards appreciating the teaching and personality of our Lord. An open and a complete Bible ; this is the right policy.

IV

Only those who have witnessed it can appreciate the intense joy with which the Scriptures, translated into their own speech, are received by the people. Other than a spelling-book and a primer, the Gospel of St Mark is often the first book they possess. By the time it is ready for them, many have learnt to read ; with what delight and satisfaction they turn over the pages and begin to peruse them ! There is much more in this than the child's pleasure in something new. They have often heard from their teachers that the Bible is the greatest book in the world ; now the possession of even only one fraction of it in their own mother-tongue means that they are sharing with the Christian world the most precious of its treasures. This heightens their sense of personal dignity, adds enormously to their self-respect, and this in itself is a valuable element in their education. No wonder if they rejoice, even though they cannot fully realize all that it means, and will mean to them and their people. Dr Oscar Kallas tells what he heard a Livonian say when he received a Gospel : " Here is a document which proves that we also are human beings—the first and only book in our language." " Now we see that our friends in the foreign country regard us as people worth while," said a Christian in Angola when

he took the Gospels in his hand for the first time. When the complete Bible in the Ronga language reached him a Wesleyan missionary showed it at a meeting of native Christians. One of the elders said: "I know that in my body I am a very little man, but to-day as I see the whole Bible in my language I feel as big as a mountain." Another declared: "I wish that I were as big as an ox, or had the voice of an ox, so that I might shout the great joy which I feel."

These men were saying what thousands of people in many lands have said when they first received the Scriptures. And in their joy the translator finds a part of his great reward.

V

And now as we draw to a conclusion we may ask, and answer in brief, two questions: What is the Bible doing, and what may it be expected to do, for these peoples who have recently received it? And what will they do for the Bible?

The answer to the first question is that the Bible will do for other people what it has done for ourselves as individuals and as a nation.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch affirms that the Bible has influenced English literature more deeply than any other book—far more deeply than all the writings of Shakespeare. After quoting some few glorious sentences he goes on:

When a nation has achieved this manner of diction, these rhythms for its dearest beliefs, a literature is surely established. . . . The Authorized Version . . .

set a seal on our national style. It has cadences homely and sublime, yet so harmonizes them that the voice is always one. Simple men—holy and humble men of heart like Izaak Walton and Bunyan—have their lips touched and speak to the homelier tune. Proud men, scholars—Milton, Sir Thomas Browne—practise the rolling Latin sentence; but upon the rhythms of our Bible they, too, fall back. . . . The precise man Addison cannot excel one parable in brevity or in heavenly clarity. . . . The Bible controls its enemy Gibbon as surely as it haunts the curious music of a light sentence of Thackeray's. It is in everything we see, hear, feel, because it is in us, in our blood.[1]

This is a great thing to say of a book, the translation of a foreign book; but who will regard it as exaggerated? To have set the standard of a nation's speech—"a well of English undefiled, quick, running, curative, refreshing, vivifying"—to have inspired a nation's teachers, moulded their style, given words to their thoughts: this may seem to some people a minor service, but whosoever reflects upon what a literature means to a people will never regard the service as a trivial one. Sir Arthur is surely right in casting away with scorn that contemptuous phrase, "mere literature": "There is in fact, Gentlemen, no such thing as mere literature."

And what the Bible has done in this respect for the English-speaking peoples, it is doing for other peoples. Chinese literati despised the colloquial style in which the so-called Mandarin version of the Bible was written:

[1] Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Reading* (1920), pp. 155–6.

but the language of that version has now become the literary vehicle of modern China. Translations of the Bible, beautifully and idiomatically made in scores of languages that previously never knew a book, have set the standard for all the future literature—clarifying the grammar, enlarging the vocabulary, modelling the style. The newer nations already look up to the Bible as the greatest literary treasure they possess, the noblest example of their tongue.

The Bible has been a great instrument of education among ourselves. Education, we know, is more than the impartation and learning of facts; its ultimate aim is a moral one—the formation and sustenance of a fully developed, free personality. The Scriptures present an ideal of personality and character, capable of universal application, comprehensive enough to serve as the ultimate moral aim of all education. "It is revealed, on the one hand, in the personality and character of Jesus Christ, and, on the other hand, in the Kingdom of God, combining in one coherent whole both the individual and the social aspects of the moral ideal." [1]

That ideal has been held up by the educators of England, and though as a people we have not attained to it, at least we recognize it as the highest that can be, and multitudes have striven, and are striving, to make it real. And even on lower levels the Bible has been a great educator of our people. Thomas Huxley in his protest against the exclusion of the Bible from the schools said that, "It forbids the veriest hind,

[1] J. M. Jones, *The New Testament in Modern Education* (1922), p. 10.

who never left his village, to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations and of a great past stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized?" Any person who knows the English Bible through and through cannot be called uneducated, even though he may know little else.

Now think of the Bible as the great instrument of education, not only of our people but of the whole human race, for that is what it is becoming, thanks to the translators and distributors and teachers. It is being read and taught in thousands of schools all over the world. To peoples who never had a book before, to many who still have hardly any other book than some part of the Bible, it is a great encyclopædia of knowledge, opening a door to acquaintance with the story of other nations; reading it they get to know something of the sweep of human history, are introduced to some of the great personalities of the past, to the moral forces making for the greatness of peoples, with the evils that make for their decadence; it gives them a grip of the grand significance of human life. I have no space to quote testimonies in support of these assertions; but take as a solitary example what Mr Mayhew, late Director of Public Instruction in the Central Provinces of India, says: "The record of the life and personality of Christ has done far more educationally for India than the whole of western literature." [1]

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch utters a solemn warning

[1] Arthur Mayhew, *The Education of India* (1926), p. 74.

against regarding the Bible or any part of it as "fine writing," mere literature; "men do not go to the stake for the cadences, the phrases of our Authorized Version." We may find many lovely and helpful things in the Bible story, poetry, proverb, history, oratory—but unless we find God there it fails of its supreme mission to our souls. Not ideas about God, but God. Dr James Moffatt has told of a correspondent who wrote to him about his new version of the Bible: "I have read all Isaiah through at a sitting, with a new sense of these men's sense of God—caught myself looking round for Him." We cannot read either the Old Testament or the New without discovering that the writers had a magnificent certainty of God; their whole souls were aglow with a consciousness of His presence; and especially is this so of the men who had seen His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. To them He was no absentee, otiose God, but present and active—a working God. And in many thousands, nay millions, of readers of the Bible that experience has been reproduced; it is the cardinal experience—life can never be the same again when you have gained it. And these readers are not all of our own race; men of various nations, of diverse stages of culture, Chinese, South Sea islanders, Negroes, Indians, have come to God through the Bible, and therefore to a fuller and happier life. Many of them have had no other instructor; without human interpreter or guide the pages of the Bible have led them to God and to life. Herein lies the true value of Holy Scripture.

One other point. The increasing strength of

branches of the Christian Church in many lands indicates that the missionary enterprise which has characterized the last one hundred and fifty years is now entering upon a new phase. The foreign mission is not a permanent institution ; it will pass away, even as it ceased to be in our own land ; the Church remains. These " younger Churches," as the Jerusalem Council has taught us to call them, are gaining a new sense of corporate life and responsibility ; more and more they will become independent of the older Churches in leadership and financial support. The Church in China, for example, will one day be as independent of the Church in England as the English Church is of the Chinese, though both will be indissolubly linked together as integral parts of the universal Church. The fostering of such an indigenous Church depends chiefly, among other things, on the building up of its spiritual life through communion with God in prayer and in public and private worship, and through knowledge of the Bible in the vernacular. So rightly said the Jerusalem Council. It is of prime importance to these Churches that they should possess the Bible and that it be read and understood. Bishop Steere of Zanzibar declared, " All our work here must be unsound without a vernacular Bible," and this applies equally well to long established Churches as to the newly founded. History tells of Christian communities that have disappeared, and of others that have grown corrupt, largely, and perhaps chiefly, because they had no Bible in the vernacular or because it was a closed book to the people. The great reforms in the Church have always come about through going back

to the Scriptures. Tyndale said that he translated the Bible into English because "I had perceaved by experience how that it was impossible to stablysh the laye people in any truth, excepte the scripture were playnly layde before their eyes in their mother tonge, that they might se the processe, ordre and meaninge of the texte." And it is true also of the clerics. The Scriptures are the charter of Christian liberty, the norm of Christian doctrine and conduct, the only means by which Christian people may learn of the personality and teaching of our Lord. To desert the Scriptures, to make them a sealed book, is to drift away into superstition and paganism. Nothing but the Scriptures can keep the younger Churches tethered to the central truths of our religion. Happily the Churches overseas are very largely literate, and they have access to the Bible. We need have no fear of their future while this is the case.

And what will these Christians of other climes do for the Bible? As they grow in knowledge of it, as native Tyndales and Luthers arise to make more perfect versions of it, and devout men bring their minds to bear upon its great truths, can we doubt that the Bible will become a richer book? It is not the book of one race but the book of humanity, and not until all mankind interprets it in the light of various racial genius will all its meaning be revealed. We read our translations of Scripture not only in national words but with national minds; the Indian must therefore read it differently from the Englishman. We are practical people and it is the ethics of the Bible that

seem to us its most valuable element; but there is a mystical element which may be almost incomprehensible to ourselves but yet be clear and the most valuable element of all to the Eastern mind. St Paul's formula "in Christ" (he repeats it a hundred and sixty-four times) puzzles us; we rationalize it or ignore it; but it may well be that there are people to-day in India who can understand Paul and interpret for the rest of Christendom this characteristic expression of his Christianity. Did not Dr Westcott say that the adequate commentary on St John would one day be written by an Indian? God has yet more light and truth to break forth from His word; and it will be fully unsealed when the Eternal Spirit speaks through it to all mankind.

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